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ROMANCE
of
RURAL CHURCHES

by
L. G. FREY

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L. G. FRÉY

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L. G. FREY, *Business Manager*
Executive Board, and
Recording Secretary
Tennessee Baptist Convention

DEDICATION

To my wife, the mother of four children whose consecration, courage, and constructive criticism have steadied me; whose sympathy, faith and interest have encouraged me; whose love and loyal devotion have kept me enthusiastically at my task, regardless of what that task is, I humbly dedicate this book.

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WHY I WRITE IT

A new day seems to be dawning for the rural churches in our Southland, and Romance of Rural Churches is offered as an encouragement in this new program.

At the suggestion of the preachers attending our Summer Schools, I have reduced to writing the substance of my lectures on the Rural Church. Their request was that I retain the same phraseology spoken from brief notes in the class-room—a well-nigh hopeless task. This book is written with the half and quarter-time preacher in mind. Therefore, no fine-spun theories are presented. Only that which has been through the mill of actual experience with some little country church off the beaten path is offered.

No claim is made to originality. Only the form and arrangement could be called mine. When I think of how I have become so much a part of that which I have heard, read, and experienced, I doubt if I could even lay claim to that.

I want to thank several individuals who have been of great assistance in reading the manuscript and offering valuable suggestions. These gratitudes go out to Dr. Chas. W. Pope, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention; Dr. O. W. Taylor, Editor, Baptist and Reflector; Dr. R. E. Guy, Teacher of Greek in Union University and Pastor of West Jackson Baptist Church; Dr. G. Allen West, Jr., Pastor of Woodmont Baptist Church, Nashville, and Rev. Warner G. Rutledge, Superintendent, Department of Sunday Schools, Baptist State Mission Board. Mrs. Jeanne Cathey and my daughter, Mrs. Robert B. Baker, are due special mention for typing and proof-reading the manuscript. Permission was granted by the Oklahoma Baptist University Press to quote from Rural Church Problems.

I send this book out with fear and trembling, yet with the hope that it will help some discouraged, but faithful country preacher in God's back pasture. Just how well I have succeeded, or failed, in my task, I must leave to the sympathetic judgment of that great host of country preachers for whom it was written.

L. G. FREY.

January 1, 1947
1510 Paris Avenue
Nashville, Tennessee

INTRODUCTION

THE AUTHOR

It is a well established fact that very many of the best preachers have come from the Country. Most of "The Old Testament Prophets" were country-bred and most of the Apostles were country-men. With these facts before us we wonder why "Country Churches" and "Country People" are ever neglected. We also wonder why so few preachers prefer "Country Pastorates."

The author of this book has had flattering opportunities of becoming pastor of city churches. He has always turned a deaf ear and headed his car toward the country. His first pastorates were out toward "Macedonia" and just as soon as he proved that "Country Churches" can be developed to the point where they will support a pastor, the city churches began extending a beckoning hand.

His first love was and is "The Country Church" and in these chapters he has pictured all "The Technique" which he has used in arousing the interest of country people. He has a friendliness for "Every-day-people" and the mother of that friendliness is a genuine interest in "Others." He has not made his pastorates a sideline. He has given up the comforts of his own fireside that he might bless his people around theirs.

Our Southland needs this book. Every pastor should read it and pass it on to others. It will arouse interest in city pastors and it will give hope to country pastors by showing them how they can become in reality "Shepherds" of God's sheep. It will take preachers from the plow handles and put them on the highways and in the hedges seeking the lost sheep.

R. E. GUY, Pastor
West Jackson Baptist Church
Jackson, Tennessee

THE COUNTRY CHURCH PROBLEM

The rural districts have always been the strongholds of Southern Baptists. The simplicity of their form of worship, the democratic form of church government, as well as their emphasis upon the Bible as their rule of faith and practice appeals to the liberty-loving, sincere people of the country. It is a well known fact that our country churches have played a large part in providing the leadership of our denomination.

Rural churches of today face handicaps and problems which were unknown to the country churches of a half-century ago. Improved means of transportation and communication, which mean so much to the economic and social well-being of our country people, have in many cases militated against the development of the country churches. The consolidated country schools, which did away with the poorly equipped one room schools, have revolutionized the educational program for country people. Our country churches have not always been able, and sometimes not willing, to keep pace with these general improvements. The result is that many of our country churches have lost much of their membership, their leadership and their financial support.

The effort of this book is to lead our country people to adopt a church program which will revitalize the country church. The greatest problem of the country church is to secure and adequately support a competent and sufficiently trained ministry. Where this problem is solved, other problems become easy of solution. This book shows how country churches may adopt programs and form fields which may support a full-time pastor. It should be read and studied by all country pastors and country people interested in the improvement of country churches.

CHAS. W. POPE, Executive Secretary
Tennessee Baptist Convention
Nashville, Tennessee

CHAPTER I

THE DARE OF RURAL CHURCHES

The apologetic remark "I'm just a country preacher," is due chiefly to a lack of information about the bigness of rural church life in the history of Baptists. It has done, and is still doing, untold mischief among preachers and must be counteracted and killed as quickly as possible. Full information in the hands of rural pastors is the best antidote for trouble.

The bigness of rural church opportunities and responsibilities is enough to stagger one's imagination. It is likely to blow a "mental fuse" for any of the uninformed. Look at a few of the stimulating facts and you will see mountains where you have been dealing with mole-hills.

I. THE CHALLENGE OF GREATER MEMBERSHIP AND MORE CHURCHES

1. *Baptists Living in the Country.* In the 1946 Baptist State Convention Minutes, you will find listed a total of 2,345 churches, 1,931 of which are country and village churches with a combined membership of 268,662. That leaves in towns and cities 414 churches with only 230,317 members. Which is another way of saying there are nearly five times as many churches in the country as in the cities. Also the rural membership is larger by 38,345.

This is not said to belittle the city churches, but to reveal the bigness of rural Baptist life.

2. *Little Competition.* Brother pastor, when you feel called to work with country churches, don't feel sorry for yourself because of so-called limited opportunities and mumble to your closest friends about personal sacrifice; but stick out your chest, draw in your chin and thank God for choosing you for such a big and noble task in His kingdom.

You are to be no pusher of peanut wagons, or purveyor of floral designs for a lost cause in a decadent and dying community. You are engaged in a business that is calculated to arouse envy among the angels—preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ!

You will be privileged to labor in the wide-open spaces with people who will loyally support a Christian program. Many of our rural people live in communities not yet touched by a New Testament church, or Sunday school. Would you like to pioneer a mission in one of those neglected spots where a thriving church could be developed?

II. THE CALL OF UNDEVELOPED CHURCHES

1. *Neglected Needs.* Bigness of the job is not the only challenging feature of rural church work. There are the thousands of one-room churches from the coves in the mountains to the river bottoms and on every hillside where the only program they know is once-a-month preaching and that by an absentee pastor.

Not all, but many of them have no regular teaching, training, or missionary programs. Little or no stewardship instruction or financial system can be found in operation.

2. *Willing but Waiting.* There they are, potential power-houses of the gospel, struggling along waiting for God's man to lead them out of the fog of indifference. They are willing, but they are undeveloped. They probably have done the best they could with what they have, but they possess the latent longing for something better. When given the chance, they always surprise us by their response.

Do you see any challenge from this angle? Would you like to be a modern Moses to lead them out of the morass of doubt, hesitation and indifference, into the promised land of vision, fruitfulness and service for the Master? Fear not, brother pastor, if the Lord calls you to the country, He has a blue-print for your work that unerringly points to success according to heaven's standard.

III. THE CALL FOR KINGDOM RECRUITS

Country churches have always furnished the majority of our preachers and Christian workers. They are doing it now. Who is he that dares to say they will not continue doing so? Out there in some neglected community may be another George W. Truett, or a Robert G. Lee, waiting for a consecrated country preacher to encourage him through an aggressive New Testament program in the home church.

One's usefulness in the kingdom may be multiplied many times through the lives of young men and young women found, stimulated and encouraged to heed God's call for a full preparation.

Surely this is a challenge not to be dealt with lightly.

Remember, God has condescended to use human instruments in accomplishing His purposes. Has He selected you for that kind of instrument? Then by all means try to be your best for Him wherever you are.

IV. THE NEED OF THE FULL-TIME FIELD

1. *Pastor as Well as Preacher.* Still another challenge in the rural work should stir the heart and fire the imagination of the man facing the the rural pastorate. That is the growing of two or more churches into a joint pastorate, or the development of a church into a full-time field where the potential economic background will permit.

Eventually, it will mean a home among the people to whom ministered—one with the comforts and conveniences on a par with the average member's home. It will mean more time for the pastor to be in his own home, and more time among the membership, because it eliminates the absentee pastor's travel time with the inevitable drain upon the meager cash income.

The lure of a home that is fixed to meet the usual needs is not a selfish one with the pastor. His best work in a community makes it a necessity. Rural churches are slowly learning, but learning nevertheless, that a pastor's home always attracts the better trained man for their church.

If we believe Jesus meant what He said in Luke 10:7, "The laborer is worthy of his hire", then

we can conclude that our church will get about the kind of laborer for which we pay. My observation is that country pastors are not very commercially minded either.

2. *A Trail-blazer.* Is a constructive program like this for a country field challenging to you? It is being done today in spots throughout the Southland. Shall we be followers of conservative customs of the ox cart age, or shall we blaze a new trail by adapting our methods or procedures and give the Gospel its rightful place? Remember, it is still God's dynamite unto salvation!

3. *In the Southland.* What has been said of the rural church challenge in Tennessee is true of all the states of our Southland, multiplied many times. Country churches, as conservative as they are, will follow sane, sound sensible pastoral leadership.

It is all right for the pastor to get his head "up in the clouds" occasionally, just so long as he keeps his feet on the ground. His plans and programs must have the practical or workable ring to them.

V. PRESENT DAY RESPONSE

1. *The State Mission Program.* During the last four years, State Missions has encouraged the associations to employ full-time missionaries by offering to pay from one-third to one-half of the salary. The number of workers has grown from 12 to 49 in four years. Their chief business has been to help pastors strengthen the churches in a well-rounded Christian program. Just how well these

associational missionaries have succeeded may be seen from a study of the records of 1942 and 1946.

2. *The Statistical Picture.*

	1942	1946	
No. Baptist Churches in Tennessee	2,260	2,345	*59
No. Full Time Churches	520	790	*270
No. Half Time Churches	485	604	*119
No. Quarter Time Churches	1,195	892	**303
Total Number Church Members	427,323	497,164	*69,841
Baptisms	16,862	21,548	*4,686
Total State Mission Budget	\$ 88,100.00	\$ 282,500.49	*\$ 194,400.49
Cooperative Program Gifts	\$381,393.87	\$ 985,468.32	*\$ 604,074.45
Total Gifts to all causes			
Cooperative and designated	\$705,014.34	\$1,771,505.03	*\$1,066,490.69
Tennessee Baptist Foundation Fund Balances	\$ 10,338.63	\$ 710,824.93	*\$ 700,486.30

3. *An Analysis of the Figures.* Just how many of the 270 new full-time churches are in the country, we cannot say because information is not available. But conservatively speaking, half of them would be classified as rural.

The increase in the number of half-time churches, 119, would be chiefly in the open country or towns of 1,000 population, or less.

When we come to the loss in quarter-time churches, we rejoice, throw our hats into the air, and praise the Lord. "He hath done great things for us whereof we are glad." This change has all occurred in the country. It is one loss in statistics of which we are justly proud.

* Increase. ** Decrease.

It means that 303 quarter-time churches have moved up to half, or full-time preaching. It means more than 25% of Tennessee's quarter-time churches became dissatisfied with their way of serving the Lord and improved it greatly. It means more lost people will be won to Christ, more money will be given to missions and benevolences, more Christians will be matured, and more interest in those communities will be Christ-centered than ever before.

Credit, so far as workers are concerned, will go to the pastors and associational missionaries in these sections. What they have done can be duplicated elsewhere. The heartening thing about it all is that so fine a response has been made for the small amount of encouragement offered. It is good evidence that country churches will respond when something better is offered. They are daring us today and will continue to dare us.

CHAPTER II

SPECIAL RURAL ATTITUDES

Dr. J. W. Jent in *Rural Church Problems*, says: "They (attitudes) are REAL. They dictate and dominate the behavior of country Baptists because an attitude is emotional, rather than rational. FEELING feeds the fire of impulse and, so, attitudes resist the appeal to reason.

"Attitudes are automatic but they are ACQUIRED, rather than innate. They are transmitted tendencies, woven into the fabric and pattern of SOCIAL HEREDITY. They reflect the TRADITIONS of the countryman:—the roots of experience running deep into the pioneer life of our ancestors. They are colored by the lonely life of our fathers, who built their cabins in the wilds of the wilderness; founded the farmstead; and lived their self-sufficing life,—lord of their domain.

"The mental and emotional forms of this isolated, static life became fixed,—more or less fossilized. Succeeding generations deepened the grooves of habit, and strengthened the psychological bonds, by the unchanged continuity of their social heredity, a complex of habitual tendencies rooted in the deepest feelings of the human heart. They are anchored, practically permanent. Like the innate co-ordinations, which we call instinct, they are exceedingly difficult to modify."

I. REASONS FOR THESE ATTITUDES

Rural people are very closely akin to their city friends in their attitudes and characteristics, for human nature is pretty much the same the world over. We are all related to Adam, whether we are proud of that heritage or not. Yet there are some special attitudes, propensities, tendencies, or characteristics that are peculiar to rural people.

This is due largely in many communities to isolation. Lack of good roads and other barriers to transportation have played their part in retarding community development. Social life being confined to the one locality has a powerful tendency toward making individuals the sum total of their heredity and environment.

The currents of custom, tradition and practice run deep among rural people. They possess strong emotions and these emotions influence their thinking, affect their conclusions and give them special attitudes which the preacher must take into consideration in working with them.

These special attitudes are not necessarily detrimental. They can be, and often are, turned to advantage in promoting kingdom work. Four of these attitudes are worthy of our consideration. They are conservatism, individualism, prejudice and frankness.

1. *Conservatism* is strictly a rural trait. It is largely due to tradition and custom. To those who do not know rural people, it is a synonym for "stinginess" or "penuriousness." Country people

are not "tightwads". They are as liberal as any group on earth, when properly approached and made to understand the need or the emergency of the occasion.

Conservatism has been forced upon rural people, because of the low annual income and small amount of actual money available. Farmers have always received low pay for their long hours—from sun to sun—of labor. Special situations or conditions may boost the income of other groups, but for the farmer it usually remains the same.

My father typified rural conservatism. When I was a mere child, I heard Mother talking to him about some money she needed. A conversation followed in which my Father told about hard times, the scarcity of money, the difficulty of raising ready cash and the absolute necessity of paying certain obligations soon to become due.

As the conversation continued, Mother just listened, but I became alarmed, and wondered if soon I should have to miss some meals. My appetite was always keen three times a day and between meals, and the very thought of having to forego one meal struck terror to my boyish heart. After a while the conversation ended, and I watched my Father pull out his pocket book. It was that long leather sack-like kind that folded in the middle and when twisted at the end, opened with many mouths. One section contained change, coins. Another, bills, folding money. Another, notes he held for small loans to neighbors. Other openings were for receipts, important papers, etc.

From this purse he took the amount of money Mother wanted, handed it over (I understand completely now from experience how he felt), picked up the latest edition of the twice-a-week paper just delivered from the mail box, and relaxed. My fears subsided and I soon forgot the incident, for never had I seen my Father pull out that old leather pocket book and fail to extract from it the amount needed for the occasion. Even when I asked for a nickel and he was sure my request was not unreasonable, that same pocket book came forth and it always contained the nickel.

My Father was not a miser or a tightwad, neither was he chinchy or covetous. On the contrary he was quick to respond to the call of the needy. But my Father had been driven to conservatism. He had worked on the farm during Grover Cleveland's second term of office for 25c a day and was paid off Saturday night at that rate with a piece of smoke-house side bacon.

Self-preservation and grim necessity have driven them to conservatism. They not only must grow most of their living, but also must produce a money crop to have any "coin of the realm" in their pockets. The law of supply and demand has fixed the price of their products.

Governmental statistics have always furnished the speculators with full facts concerning growing crops, consequently, market price is fixed before harvest begins, and, as a rule, the farmer seldom, if ever, "gets any breaks." All too often, he goes "broke". If he were not a veritable wizard in

economics and as adaptable as a thermometer, he could never hope to carry on year after year against such terrific odds.

The writer grew up in the country because his father was a renter and remembers when tobacco, our only money crop then, sold for two cents a pound. When the whole year's crop was delivered, there was scarcely enough cash to shoe all the children in the family. Information on rural conservatism has come first-hand and through actual experience, therefore, the writer resents the accusations of conservatism, when used in the sense of being "stingy", or a "tightwad".

Too many rural communities have rallied to capable leadership and supported aggressive missionary programs to be labeled hopelessly conservative. The leader of rural people must know where he is going before he starts, if he is to retain their confidence and support. And that is just good bay horse sense.

These last few years have seen changes in farm income for the better, and we could hope for them to become permanent, but, the attitude of conservatism remains. It should be acknowledged, or admitted, and reckoned with sympathetically and with understanding.

2. *Individualism* is another peculiar rural disposition. Country people usually work alone and manage their affairs without consulting or advising with others. They have done this through the years and so did their ancestors, consequently, custom and tradition have played their part in

making them individualists—each one a kind of “lone wolf”.

Most of them are not aware of this attitude, but when the group comes together at church, or elsewhere, they express themselves frankly, and stick to their convictions and opinions. Naturally, it is a bit difficult for them to agree with the group, because they have had little or no experience in that direction. They will act with caution on any plan to change or vary what custom has long decreed.

Some people refer to this type of individualism as “hard-headedness”, or “mule-meanness”. It is neither one. This rural individualism is based upon conviction, and it is heavily undergirded by emotions. These people stand for something. Their conclusions may be based upon faulty premises, but they are not easily turned aside. They have determination and feel deeply their convictions. That is one reason why our very best leaders come from the country churches.

Given the right type of training, they logically gravitate to places of leadership and responsibility. Rural individualism is not a bad quality or trait. It just cannot be overlooked or ignored. Happy is the leader who recognizes this and governs himself accordingly.

3. *Prejudice.* “Rural Baptists FEEL deeply everything they believe. There is a sort of satisfaction in what they call their convictions. This comment is no criticism on conviction. Positive belief and the courage to contend for it is funda-

mental in religious integrity. BUT the emotional intensity of prejudice creates a tremendous problem in rural churches. Rural beliefs tend to persist regardless of their unreasonableness and minor importance.

"A real countryman believes what he believes and that is the end of it. He would like to 'see the color of the man's hair who can change him'. He fights for his convictions because he prizes them—he feels them—he resents any sort of contradiction and antagonism as an attack on him. He fights because he FEELS what he believes and this feeling functions as prejudice. When a rural Baptist is right, he is anchored and fixed, and so is he when he is wrong." Quoted from *Rural Church Problems*.

Prejudice is simply a conclusion arrived at before all the material facts are in. Therefore, it can best be met and successfully handled by informing the people. Give them the facts, all the facts, sympathetically and enthusiastically, and most of their prejudice will vanish, because its basic foundation has been removed.

Only the untrained or wilfully ignorant rural pastor will use argument to dominate these sincere, conscientious countrymen. There is a more excellent way, and that is "by the magnetism of the heart". Cultivate their acquaintance and wait until confidence is manifested in your ability before inaugurating radical changes.

4. *Frankness*. "The blunt, simple sincerity of country people is in marked contrast to the tact,

diplomacy, and indirection which conceals as much as it reveals in urban life. A real countryman hates pretence and sham. He believes in being what he is. To pose; to 'put on airs'; to hide behind a mask will not go in the country. The farmer says what he means and means what he says. He does not flatter or speak for effect. This attitude explains his disregard for social forms and convention." Quoted from *Rural Church Problems*.

Frankness is not a drawback, or disadvantage. In fact, it is a highly desirable trait for any group of people, and particularly is it so for Christians. Tact is fine, but when it reverts to professional diplomacy, it will not be long until it degenerates into suaveness or cleverness. As for me, give me more frankness, even with all its bluntness, and less cleverness in Christian service.

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL CHRISTIANS

The religious program in the majority of the rural churches is usually in keeping with the traditions and customs of the community. It consists of preaching and that only once a month by the absentee pastor. An absentee pastor is one who lives out of the community to which he ministers. The preaching may be biblical, and usually is, but the people take their religion to mean "going to heaven when you die" and "walking the streets of gold", instead of making it a vital, everyday part of life.

Maybe the long, lonely, laborious days of uneventful toil amid physical and spiritual "heart-

aches'' have whetted their appetites for a place of rest, peace, joy and happiness. The country preacher is an earnest one with what we might call "heart-appeal". He believes in Spirit-produced conviction, heart-felt Christianity, and preaches accordingly. The response of his congregation is serious and sympathetic.

At times the emotions become so stirred they can no longer be restrained and someone turns loose and "shouts all over God's House". The lack of formality, freedom of the service and deep emotional nature of the people make them know they have violated no rule of etiquette, or regulation of worship.

In one of my churches a great good mother in Israel would get her cup full and let it spill over while she shouted the praises of God to the positive edification of both pastor and congregation. It was not for effect, but in spite of the effects. This is perfectly legitimate and there is absolutely nothing wrong with it, but the deep feelings and spiritual exercises need to be sustained and carried over until the next gathering.

Methods of doing this are to be found in the mid-week Prayer Service, Sunday School, Training Union, directed visitation and the best preaching program possible. Jesus knew we would need a spiritual home, so He gave us New Testament Churches. To have the lights on only once a month in God's divinely instituted Lighthouse surely does not seem to be in keeping with His teachings.

An aggressive church program that gives plenty of expression to the religious nature and at the same time trains and develops rugged Christian character will not be hard to substitute for what is usually found in a rural community, if we approach the task from the proper point of view.

CHAPTER III

PROBLEMS PECULIAR TO RURAL CHURCHES

Problems, like the poor, seem destined to be with us always and especially in the country. City and country churches have many problems in common, but with these we are not concerned now. Why do country churches not prosper, grow and hold their prominent positions they once occupied?

Many reasons might be given, but after long and careful study by many diligent students the final analysis reveals only a few perplexing problems that persist and apparently defy solutions. These are peculiar to rural churches, and they constantly hamper, harass, hurt and hold back their work. Like Pharaoh's chariots in the Red Sea their progress is slow—"clogged wheels that drove heavily". What are these problems? They may be listed under three heads.

"Each of the three problems which bewilder the average rural pastor and block his church development program, is grounded in the genius (peculiar character) of his field, as differentiated from that of the town or city church. The troubles and worries of a rural pastor revolve around the MAINTENANCE of his church—an ECONOMIC problem—; its LOCATION—a SOCIAL problem—; and its PERSONNEL—a PSYCHOLOGICAL problem. The solution of these three problems is the solution of the rural church problem, because they are "THE" rural church problem. Every

other problem in a country church is "GENERAL,"—a common church problem—an issue or difficulty in the city as well as the country church." (*Quoted from Rural Church Problems*).

I. MONEY PROBLEMS

With no money in the treasury and no biblical system for obtaining and keeping it there, little or nothing is given regularly to missions, the pastor is poorly paid, the equipment is inadequate, the building is unattractive, or needs repairs, or both, and only the spiritually stout-hearted keep the doors open for the customary once-a-month preaching. With the necessary money in hand, all these troubles could be eliminated. To be sure, money is not everything in Christianity, but it is something! The church Jesus built and lived with for three years had a treasury and money was put into it, even though the Treasurer was a thief and pilfered that treasury.

Nothing recommends a community more to a home-maker than an attractive country church regularly painted with grounds and driveways well kept. It makes cold shivers chase up and down a Christian's spinal column to see a New Testament church building with grounds grown up in weeds and bushes, window glass out, doors off the hinges, steps broken, roof decayed, sills rotten and the floor wavey, ceiling dilapidated and looking down for lack of nails, the timbers of which have not felt the caress of a paint brush in a quarter of a century.

To see a church as a silent sentinel standing guard over the bush and weed-covered cemetery makes a believer feel like Ezekiel when in his vision of Jerusalem, he saw the glory cloud of the Temple departing. Surely, the love of many in that community has waxed cold and the Shepherd of that flock, like Peter, has gone fishing for something besides men. There may be other troubles at that little church, but you may rest assured that money is one of them. Yes, we must have some money, even in a country church.

Nearly all of the income depends upon agriculture. Sometimes that is so very fine it is all one could expect, while again, it can be very disappointing. In some few sections, the soil is so unproductive that it requires a hard struggle to obtain a scant livelihood. Cases like that should have first choice in getting aid from the State Mission Board.

But some of our most undeveloped churches are situated in thriving farming sections. What those churches need is a challenge that will stir them from their complacency and lethargy. The money problem is very definitely woven into the economic background of any community.

No country church will rise higher than the economic basis of the neighborhood. Some country churches are blessed with members on a regular weekly or monthly pay roll. This, with farm income, makes a happy situation for solving the money problem.

II. NEIGHBORHOOD OR THE COMMUNITY PROBLEM

A church in the open country has some very real obstacles to face which are not common to the city church. But it is definitely benefitted in escaping many distractions which afflict the city community.

"The country church is NOT IN THE CITY, consequently, the country preacher escapes the agonizing worries which beset his brother pastor in the city. The mass of congested population; the hum of industry; the "buzz" of big business; the impact of competing interest, insidious isms, the tides of worldliness and wickedness; the milling mob of the street, the nerve-racking tension in his task, bewilder and upset the city pastor.

"City life, is complex, confusing, dynamic, depressing. It is an artificial world,—a selfish, sordid world,—a world of endless excitements, glaring extremes of plutocracy and poverty, the men of genius and the incompetent masses, prophets, of charity and professionals of crime." (Quoted from *Rural Church Problems*).

1. *The Strenuous City Pastorate.* The larger constituency calling daily for ministrations, the extremes in the classes and groups to be reached, won, trained and developed, the constant ringing of the phone, the multitudinous demands for speaking engagements, serving on committees, boards, and in advisory groups, and the desire to satisfy a membership already accustomed to much service, some of which may be very exacting, may not show up soon on the city pastors, but it is nevertheless

slowly and regularly sapping their vitality faster than nature can replenish it for many of them.

When a country pastor begins to envy his city brother, because of a nice home, rent-free, in addition to what seems to be a fat salary, surrounded by a corps of paid workers, he should not completely ignore the cost. God must have both types of workers and He requires faithfulness on the part of each group.

2. *The Open Country Field.* The country church, like all others, has its liabilities along with its assets.

(1) *Liabilities*

(a) *Roads* in some sections bog down in winter, making attendance painfully low, and at times impossible. Some churches are located on paved roads, while others are moving out to the main highways, but many have become completely isolated due to changed roadways and are still on unimproved side roads. More good roads are coming and soon this problem will solve itself.

(b) *Busy Seasons* due to perishable crops in certain farming sections affect church attendance like bad roads. Days are long, work is hard and the battle against time leaves many at home, who, under ordinary circumstances, would attend.

(c) *Lure of the City* has always had its pull on rural boys and girls and time has had no effect upon that urge. So often the most promising of our young people must be lost to the home church because marriage and the opportunities for a live-

lihood appear more promising in the city. We don't blame the young people, but country pastors dislike the conditions that bring regular loss. The city pastor finds our loss his gain and perhaps agrees with the proverb, "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good." On the other hand, occasionally someone prospers to such an extent that he can afford both country and city luxuries and moves back into the country.

(d) *Shifting of Community Centers* gives the country church no little concern. Changing of schools, roads and the coming of commercial enterprises are the chief causes of fluctuations in rural centers of population. Any one of these can isolate the church building and seriously affect the attendance. Bible teaching and wisdom both seem to reveal the need of keeping the church where the people are. If they move, then move the church.

No spot of earth ought to become so hallowed and revered as to hopelessly anchor the church after the people stop coming, even if a cemetery is near by. The Lord alone can care for our dead. Even if we must move, the cemetery can be maintained and used without our losing one bit of respect and reverence for our loved ones in the silent city of the dead. We must not make the mistake made by the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, when she told Jesus about the place for worship.

(2) *Assets*

(a) *The Social Tie* in the country is strong. Rural people usually are well acquainted with all

their neighbors or they want to get acquainted, consequently, the church gatherings afford an excellent opportunity for "howdying", brief visiting, and satisfying the social urge, or desire for fellowship. Evidently Jesus had this in mind when he gave us New Testament Churches. The removal of barriers which once isolated rural centers, has robbed us of much of the community attraction and prominence, but there is enough left to list it as an asset.

(b) *Telephones* on the rural routes work over time doing neighborhood visiting, and their increase will help hold that community spirit. Then, too, the pastor can call and be called to the saving of much time and driving in his daily ministrations.

(c) *Rural Electrification* is meaning much already and will mean more for it is making available to country people all the labor-saving devices, conveniences, and comforts of the city, with none of its disadvantages. Lighting, heating, ventilating and even cooling systems are now available in the remotest rural community, because of electricity. Homes as well as churches can have these comforts and certainly they add to the attractiveness of living conditions back in the hills.

(d) *Automobiles and Good Roads* help, or hinder, religious life in the country, depending upon the use to which they are put. Frankly, I'll take both and risk using them for the good of the community and the glory of God. An interesting, constructive, aggressive church program will

ultimately make its appeal in the country and hold the people. That very thing is being done today in certain sections. With good roads, busses for transportation may be used to haul the people, without cars from the outside limits of the community to the church.

(e) *Consolidation of Grammar Schools* and the rapidly vanishing one-teacher and two-teacher schools, have played important parts in rural community life. Consolidations appear to be fixed public school procedure, at least for the present, and may probably prove a blessing in rural church life, even though it may seem somewhat disguised. These consolidated schools begin as centers of the community life. Even though this is good for the public schools, I do not advocate the consolidation of rural churches.

The wise rural pastor will try to locate his church building in reasonably close proximity, join that center of interest, and try to so permeate it with Christian principles and practices that the community program will never become embarrassing, or even questionable. The morals of that community can be kept high and "parasitical business" will find it next to impossible to locate, much less do business there.

III THE LEADERSHIP PROBLEM

"This is the third and final differentiating fundamental of the rural pastor's field. The most difficult problem a country preacher has, is HIS PEOPLE. Country Baptists are a problem,—A

REAL PROBLEM,—because they are RURAL-MINDED. They are a psychological type. A countryman is differentiated by his ATTITUDES,—the traits and tendencies which are peculiar to his class, contrasted with the city man.” (Quoted from *Rural Church Problems*).

This topic has been dealt with in Chapter II as it pertains to rural-mindedness, but we still have the painful, paralyzing problem of finding or growing leaders to carry on a well-rounded country church program. The rural pastor may do the jobs of pastoring, preaching, and janitoring. He may act as Sunday School Superintendent, Training Union Director and be the official “tune-lifter”.

He may do all this with some degree of apparent success, but when he leaves all the leadership leaves with him and the poor little church is actually poorer because of that preacher. No, the pastor is never to be the official pack-horse. Well, what can be done to overcome this ever-present lack of capable leaders?

The best thing is to admit it, then try to do something about it. In every community there are a few people whom God has endowed with reasonable capabilities. Find them, cultivate them, encourage them, and try to challenge them to their God-given opportunities with which they are surrounded. Then begin a training program,—lead it yourself,—and keep enthusiastically at it until something happens.

God will either crown your efforts with some degree of success, or He will send some other community after you. You will not be forgotten if you do his business faithfully, but it will take time. You must have patience, faith and fortitude.

Unless a man feels a call to the country, right here is where the "shaking-down" process will decide the issue. Those with only apparent calls to the country will usually seek the bright lights of the city.

CHAPTER IV

THE COUNTRY PASTOR

When Hosea said, "where there is no vision the people perish", he must have had in mind the country situation. For vision, hope, courage and faith must dominate the man who is called to minister to rural fields, or he will "grow weary in well doing".

I. THE RURAL PASTOR IS A PROBLEM

1. *For the Churches.* The country church has its difficulties in locating a pastor who loves rural people and whose heart is really fixed on the task. All too often, country churches must accept the untrained, inexperienced and uninitiated, or be content with preachers whose age has necessitated their giving up the larger pastorates. If they manage to get a college or seminary man, it is only until graduation.

Few college graduates and practically no seminary graduates make rural pastorates their major objectives. It is sad, but true, that rural churches are stepping stones to bigger fields, and that may be all right, but some of the stones are showing a great deal of "wear and tear".

2. *For the Denomination.* The denomination must depend upon the co-operation of the churches. The key man in every church is its pastor. That is as it should be. He must be considered, consulted, and counselled with in connection with every denominational move.

If he is sympathetic and a man of vision, his church will want to share in the world-wide mission efforts and govern itself accordingly. The denomination will be just as strong as the churches of which it consists, therefore, we must have country pastors with vision, courage and zeal that is according to knowledge.

II. WHY IS THE COUNTRY SO DIFFICULT?

Some pastors who did only fair or mediocre work in the country have accepted large city fields and have done unusually well. Some will attribute this variation of success to chance, or luck, but beneath it all there are certain well-defined reasons, or causes.

1. *Few Trained Workers.* Few well-trained and experienced laymen are to be found in the average rural church, therefore, the pastor must be very capable to fill all these gaps, or vacancies in the organization with the untrained and keep the program working. In nearly all the city churches, there is an abundance of capable leadership with only the problem of enlisting them to be considered.

We can almost envy our brother pastor in the city, with his numerous workers on every hand, but envy will not solve our problem. We must roll up our sleeves, pull off our coats, and bend our backs to the task of growing a few "lieutenants".

2. *Pastor as Well as Preacher.* Minimizing the pastoral side of the preacher's labors has accumulated a great host of pastors who honestly believe

they have "earned their salt", and fulfilled every country church obligation when they have "preached". To be sure, they mean to include funerals and weddings, and will drive as many miles as any man without expecting any remuneration. Yes, the sick will be visited whenever the pastor happens to be on the field. But the genuine conviction that a preacher should live among his people and minister to them daily has never gotten much consideration.

The only excuse I've ever heard is that the church is too poor to pay a living wage. But country preachers alone are not to blame for that situation. Churches must assume their full share.

Preachers usually like that "absentee pastor freedom", and many country churches like quarter-time preaching because it costs less. Both attitudes are dead wrong! Country preachers need to become pastors and the churches need to furnish the necessary support.

3. *Absentee Shepherd.* The itinerating system (part-time preaching) is a product developed over a long period and bequeathed to us by our courageous, but persecuted forefathers. It has been a custom so long that we cannot hope for any sudden transition now.

It probably served a very good purpose when Baptists were few and unpopular, but now, even in country communities, Baptists are many and constantly increasing. In order to meet their needs and properly minister to them, pastoral care is rapidly becoming an absolute necessity.

It is bad to have only a monthly preaching program, but the absence of the preacher from the field 29 out of 30 days is worse. No business on earth could long exist under similar circumstances. The fact that these little country churches won't, or can't die, is strong evidence of their divine nature.

They have withstood more ordinary preaching, survived on less pastoral care, and continue to exist longer in spite of discouragements, disappointments and obstacles as Gospel Lighthouses than any other organizations on earth. Give the country churches pastoral care demanded by city churches, and you will see sleeping giants rise, shake themselves, and carry the Commission to the ends of the earth.

4. *The Short-call.* The annual call is a "mechanical gadget" used by most rural churches as a brake to slow down an already slow-moving body of Christ. Of itself, it may appear utterly harmless, but experience teaches us that too often it becomes a "well-oiled" skid for removing the pastor for almost any whim or petty difference. In the country, it is a part of our polity, but is poor practice, and many of the churches are seeing it and just quietly eliminating the annual call.

Only one of my churches ever practiced the annual call on me, and when a particular "leader" moved from that community, we mutually forgot the custom. Baptist preachers and churches are theoretically strong on the Spirit's leadership for each, but the practice seems to lag at times.

The "annual call" definitely seems to be on its way out in the country, and that ought to be encouraging.

III. THE COUNTRY PASTOR'S TRAINING

When the educational level was chiefly "Readin', 'Ritin', an' 'Rithmetic", the rural pastor had no difficulty maintaining his dignity and academic standing as leader in his community. But now when our public school system has brought a high school education to every home on the rural routes, the untrained preacher is having his leadership questioned and challenged.

If he blunders too much in reading and speaking the grammar or the English sentence, people intuitively wonder if he might not blunder in his interpretation of the Bible. They know "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God".

1. *Better Trained Pastors.* Country churches need, right now, better qualified and trained pastors. Most of them frankly admit it, and others are coming to it rapidly. While I was spending the night in a home far back in the Cumberland Mountains, the father of a large family spoke a "parable" when he said, calling his pastor by name, "He's the best we got in our association, but his third grade education is making it increasingly hard for him to hold the interest of our children who are now graduating in large numbers from the high schools". That father's youngest children were then in high school. The "oxcart church

program" of 75 years ago is out now just like the oxcart itself.

One thinks it strange that our methods in passing the Gospel on to the new generations have not kept pace with methods in agriculture, education, and transportation. But it is due to a lack of leadership. We country preachers plead guilty, but promise to do better.

2. *Special Training Needed.* The kind of training a rural pastor needs is the kind that is already adapted to his specific tasks. This, of course, shifts the responsibility back to our schools, and colleges. Where can a country preacher enroll now for a course in Rural Church Administration? We pause for an answer. Let us hope we don't have to pause too long. Surely some far-sighted Baptist school man will come to our rescue.

Where will the country pastor turn for usable literature written specifically for him and his many pressing problems? Where? Some efforts have been made, but usually by those too far removed from the regular scenes of activity to be of much help, or it is couched in phraseology almost unintelligible to those for whom it was intended.

Naturally, he needs to know his English Bible. This is imperative. He needs to know something about how to build a sermon, for he must regularly make delivery to his people. A knowledge of Church History would add strength and confidence to his teaching. But unless he knows something about Country Church Administration, his attempt to interest his congregation will be "left-handed"

to say the least. (See Chapter V for suggestions on administration).

It would be a distinct advantage to the country pastor, if he had technical training in agriculture. Any encouragement the pastor can give along better farming lines is definitely aiding his own church program.

IV. PASTORAL SUPPORT

Little or no stewardship teaching and preaching account for the poor support of country preachers. Two choices confront the pastor. One is to get and keep a secular job which pays a living and preach to the church for nothing, or next to nothing. But this pauperizes the church and places giving on the plane of charity—alms-giving. We forget that Jesus said, "the laborer is worthy of his hire".

The other is to begin a program of teaching and indoctrinating the people in stewardship. Just give them the Bible, and less of your own opinion, followed by personal practice, and you will be agreeably surprised at the fine response of your rural people. Brethren, it will work where you are. I dare you to try it!

V. CONFLICTING CHARACTERISTICS OF COUNTRY PASTORS

1. *The Sacrifice.* Country preachers are a great-hearted group, but they have a few native tendencies that are positively hurtful, one of which is self-pity. I've heard it from the pulpit and

privately. When a pastor publicizes the fact that he is making a great sacrifice to pastor a church, he is getting sorry for himself, and that is bad. Certainly, many do sacrifice and so do their wives, because of low income. No one questions that. Advertising the fact, though, is not the best remedy for the trouble.

I believe we should anoint our faces and appear not to "sacrifice". Show instead a cheerful disposition with that sacrifice, but all the time be teaching your people God's way of finance, and soon you'll forget you ever had to sacrifice, and "verily, thou shalt be fed".

Frankly, I, too, have failed to get a living out of some of my churches for a short time, but I would hesitate to call that sacrifice. It's the only investment of mine that is paying dividends now.

2. *Greener Pastures.* Sometimes a wrong outlook will make the work burdensome when it might be a joy. Hard problems will at times make a pastor sigh for "greener pastures", but we should not forget there might be a "troublesome sister", or a fuss over where the piano should sit, right there amid those green pastures.

3. *No Blind Alley.* Remember, brother pastor, some "giant preachers" have come out of those hills. Amos came from the hills, so did John the Baptist. Most of the outstanding modern day preachers were "bred and born" in the country. A few great ones have continued in the country: P. H. Mell, John D. Mell, Governor James P.

Eagle, A. M. Poindexter, and G. M. Savage. Each one was highly honored by the denomination.

Don't you think they constitute pretty good company? Don't be ashamed of putting "Elder John Doe, R. F. D. No. 4, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Podunk, Tennessee" on your personal stationery. An R. F. D. degree may be all you will ever possess, brother pastor, but it is honorable in God's sight, and you ought to be proud of it.

4. *Untapped Wealth.* The thousands of country churches in our Southland, largely undeveloped, possess latent possibilities for the kingdom undreamed of by most servants of the Lord. In them we must find recruits for the ministry, teachers for our schools, and missionaries for the homeland and abroad.

They hold sufficient wealth which, if tapped and made available, would largely finance the kingdom's operations in evangelizing the world. Country pastor, get your pick and shovel, and go prospecting. "Thar's gold in them thar hills."

CHAPTER V

RURAL CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

I. THE REGULAR SERVICES

According to the Spirit, the pastor is, by nature of his position, the overseer of the flock. He is the spiritual advisor, but he is more than that. He is the chief administrative officer, if the church is to have one.

“The relation and responsibility of a divinely ordained church ‘overseer’ is essentially official, administrative, executive, managerial. Real pastors of New Testament churches, Twentieth Century as well as First Century, ‘pastor’ as well as preach. They lead as well as ‘feed’ the flock.” (*Rural Church Problems*, Jent).

The New Testament meaning of the word Bishop indicates the nature of his work as an overseer, as well as that of a minister. In the New Testament, the words bishop and elder are used in the sense of pastor today. Preachers would all be more nearly biblical, if they prefixed the term “elder” instead of “reverend” to their names.

Unless the pastor assumes the responsibility as administrator, there will be hesitation, faltering, and indecision in the church’s program. Much of this work will, and rightfully should, be properly delegated to trusted and capable helpers.

1. *The Pastor on Sunday.* The success or failure of Sunday’s services will depend largely upon the

preparation during the preceding six days. Don't depend upon the inspiration of the hour, brother pastor, because you and I have been admonished to study (2 Tim. 2:15).

(1) The Sunday School is the church teaching the Bible, therefore, the pastor must not neglect his duty here. He may, or may not, teach, depending upon immediate needs; but by all means he must be ready to teach.

His overseeing eye must watch for beginning on time, running on time, and closing on time. Nothing deadens like haphazardness here. He will observe whether all remain for the worship hour, and take steps accordingly.

(2) This hour of worship will be directed so as to climax the morning services. With every detail carefully and prayerfully worked out, the pastor can more easily lead his people in worshipping God. This does not mean a lot of form, ceremony, and ritual; but a natural transition from one part to another so as to magnify God, and keep the parts of the program and individuals subdued.

The message will be prominent, but the messenger inconspicuous. Let us remember the Spirit can guide in our preparation as well as in the execution of the worshipping program.

"The glory of the Sabbath in a rural community is worship. The people assembled for fellowship in prayer and praise, led to the throne of Grace by the 'Shepherd' of the sheep, are sounding

the depths and climbing the heights of real religion." (*Rural Church Problems*, Jent).

(3) The afternoon may be used in such a way as to make the pastor well-nigh worthless in the evening services. Often this is the case with the part-time preacher. I plead guilty myself. We feel forced to visit, lead a conference, or have a regular afternoon appointment to preach and teach.

Few people show up at the night gathering, and then appear drowsy and we wonder why. Circumstances will have to govern each different situation, but a bit of rest or relaxation will prove helpful, even to the younger ministers.

(4) The Training service of the church should be conducted so it will help to prepare for the hour of worship that follows immediately. Therefore, it should begin, run, and close on time. Some churches use an intermission before preaching, just as they do after Sunday School. Nearly all the country churches prefer the combined service without the intermission.

We enthusiastically recommend the unified service. Attendance upon the worship hour by all attending the Training Unions will be carefully observed by the pastor. Any difficulties here are administrative problems for the pastor.

(5) This evening worship period should be as attractive, helpful and interesting as the morning hour. It can be, but it will demand the same consideration given the other hour. The atten-

dance upon this service furnishes a real problem to the country pastor as the overseer.

2. *The Pastor During the Week.* (1) When the Spirit said, through Paul, to young Timothy, "study", he must have had in mind country pastors. We probably don't need that admonition any worse than our city brethren, but we certainly need it.

"Sermons are not spontaneous. They grow in the mind and heart of the preacher. They are the result of both general and special preparation, physical, mental, spiritual." (*Rural Church Problems*, Jent)

It may be easier for us to move than to study, when our stock of sermons has become exhausted, but it is not good for the church or the pastor. We must have a definite place for study and that may be either at the home or the church.

However, few country churches have a suitable room, or space to improvise a study. But a regular place must be fixed some where. A fixed time for study is as necessary as a regular place. The mornings should be set aside for study, and only emergencies should be permitted to vary this schedule.

Study becomes a habit, if persisted in long enough. The pastor who fails to study is on his way out. Even his very best members will grow weary of the same sermons, stories and phraseology.

The number of books available does not matter so much; it is the use to which they are put that

counts. A few good books regularly used will affect the pastor's sermons so much that even the casual comers will sit up and take notice.

(2) Prayer meeting will be just what the pastor makes it. He can make special preparation in study and visitation and have a mid-week service of power and promise, or he can trust to "luck", or the "inspiration" of the hour and be keenly disappointed.

The mid-week prayer hour is proving a blessing to many country churches now where it has been given a sympathetic and honest trial. It will demand the best of which the Overseer is capable.

(3) Pastoral visiting is a personal and undelimited opportunity for the Shepherd to encourage the discouraged, comfort the sorrowing and bereaved, caution the careless and straying, and cheer the sick and suffering. It must be systematic and certain to be satisfactory. A good pastor is always welcome in rural homes, and in times of need he is expected.

II. GROWING THE WORKERS

1. Study courses must be outlined and kept going if we would grow Christians into efficient workers for the rural churches. Few, if any country churches, can find enough helpers to completely man a well-rounded program. We must develop them, or we have to confess failure to begin with. These courses will have to do with methods, administration, doctrines, and mission practices.

2. The Training Unions carefully graded and faithfully manned give the church members of all ages practical exercise in Christian growth and maturity. From the regular Sunday service, we may confidently expect some graduates. Often we must use them before they graduate. The best training I ever received for church work was in a B. Y. P. U. Since that time, the grading, according to age, has only improved the usefulness of this organization.

3. The Woman's Missionary Union is another church auxiliary that matures and develops its members into dependable workers. The pastor who overlooks this organization is missing a valuable source of seasoned helpers for the various places of responsibility in his church.

The Overseer will constantly be on the alert for those individuals in his membership, who may soon be developed into dependable leaders. All three of these sources will be utilized by the pastor if he is a wise administrator, or Overseer, of his flock.

III. MANAGEMENT OF THE FINANCES

1. God has not left his children in the dark and without instructions on financing the Kingdom's work. The Bible outlines, in considerable detail, the principles of stewardship that will finance a New Testament church through the fiercest storm of financial decline and depression.

The doctrine of stewardship is as much a Bible doctrine as Salvation by Grace, or Blood Atonement. When the pastor preaches and prac-

tices this doctrine, he can rest assured some of his people will join him in that holy exercise.

Many of our church members know next to nothing about stewardship because they seldom, if ever, hear it from the pulpit. Yes, the pastor must see that his members abound in this grace also (2 Cor. 8:7).

2. Study courses in the Grace of Giving and Bible finance will helpfully supplement the doctrinal preaching. Tracts should be constantly distributed. The church bulletin will serve as a regular reminder. Sometimes the Prayer Meeting may be used for an informal topical Bible study on stewardship.

Use every means and method to inform the members. Information will break down prejudice and dispel ignorance. Baptists thrive on full information, but grow suspicious when it is withheld.

3. As the chief administrative officer of the church, the pastor will see to it that his people have convenient and ample opportunities to become enlisted in the regular financial plan of the church, whatever it is. Once-a-year effort is not enough. It must be a continuous affair, because all newcomers must be enlisted also.

The pastor is not expected to do it all, but he is responsible for the proper leadership. Stewardship "grows as it goes on" in a Christian's life. Every member should be enlisted or, at short intervals, be given additional invitations to support his own church program.

IV. DIRECTING THE WORKERS

Assuming that we have some workers, what shall be their tasks and who will inspire them? All official positions in the church will be filled by regular election, but these and all other workers must be encouraged, inspired and stimulated in their respective jobs.

1. The Sunday School Superintendent is the church-elected executive officer, and if he is informed, consecrated and enthusiastic, most of the details may be left with him; but the pastor must still be the Overseer, even though he remains in the shadows, or behind the scenes. He is pastor of the Sunday school.

2. The Director of the Training Unions often times is capable and dependable and apparently needs no help, but the wise pastor keeps a watchful eye and is familiar with his plans, procedures and programs. A word of commendation fitly spoken by the pastor will add effectiveness and strength to the organization.

3. If the Prayer Meeting were advertised by personal effort, like Sunday School and Training Union, the attendance no doubt could easily be multiplied many times. Here is a place for the pastor to lead in directing his workers in building up the mid-week Prayer Hour. This is true of the Worship hours on Sunday. Wisely directed visitors can work wonders in the attendance upon the regular services.

V. OVERSEEING THE SOCIAL LIFE

1. The program of recreation or social activities will be discussed in another chapter, but as the success or failure of it depends so much upon the proper administration, we mention it here to emphasize the pastor's responsibility. He does not need to be personally in command of every activity, but he will see to it that a consecrated man or woman is in charge.

2. The negative side is represented by the commercialized places of amusement. For so much per, they entertain our young and old people alike. Almost universally, their influence is from bad to worse. They can destroy in one night what it has taken years to build. In spite of the accompanying dangers, many church members attend and engage to the embarrassment of the church. These worldly amusements, like the poor, are with us always it seems. What shall we do?

3. The positive side is to furnish a substitute that will satisfy the social urge without destroying or neutralizing Christian character. It can be done, and is being done in some church communities today by well-planned, high-toned, clean recreation, directed by a Christian worker for the different age groups.

We can denounce, complain and croak about the evils of commercial amusements, and consign all their devotees to torment; but unless we suggest some constructive substitute, we are only "baying at the moon" and wasting our good intentions and energy needlessly.

CHAPTER VI

THE RURAL CHURCH PROGRAM

The smallest church, on some secluded hillside off the main road and completely hidden by the trees and undergrowth, may maintain an up-to-date program, if that program is patterned after that found in the New Testament. The acid test is, are we following Christ's Commission given to His Church? Are we making disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to observe whatsoever He commanded?

If so, our Twentieth Century program fits the pattern laid down in our guide book, the Bible, and we should take courage. No other program, however fine it may appear, will ever please the Head of New Testament Churches.

I. EVANGELISM

1. *Preaching.* God has ordained by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Cor. 1:21). Preaching then is God's chief means of saving the lost. Preaching must occupy first place in whatever program we may devise, if we would follow the divine pattern.

What about our plan of once-a-month preaching in a New Testament Church? Has some enemy done this? Or have we unconsciously drifted into this plan because it is cheaper? Better stick to the divine plan. I find no part-time churches in the New Testament. Elders in every city seem to be God's way.

How to meet the cost is reserved for another chapter. We must support a preaching program because that is the chief requirement of the Great Commission. After disciples are made they should be taught their first act of obedience, that is, to submit to Bible baptism, in obedience to His command, in imitation of His example, and by the authority of a New Testament church to show our faith in a buried and risen Lord. We can wax eloquent, get happy, shout, and want to throw our hats into the air when carrying out this part of the Great Commission—making disciples and baptizing them.

But the other part is more prosaic. It takes patience, is long-drawn out, and requires grit and grace, plus great faith to teach them "to observe all things." The romance of the task seems to leave following the baptismal service at the close of the revival. Jesus evidently had this task in mind when he asked Peter three times if he really loved Him.

Feeding the sheep, tending the lambs, shearing the sheep, binding up the bleeding and coralling the unruly and obstreperous and searching for the straying are tasks that require faith, endurance, patience and much long-suffering.

This phase of the Commission is responsible for most of the changing pastorates in the country. But we must not grow weary in well-doing. Distinctive Baptist doctrines must be featured in our plan of preaching.

Stewarship and missions should receive constant consideration. After the foundation has been laid, we must be careful with the superstructure. Hay, wood, and stubble have no place in it.

2. *Teaching.* Through the Sunday School, Training Union, and Woman's Missionary Union, evangelism will be stressed and emphasized. Special seasons of study in methods of soul-winning and personal work will be arranged. The Bible way of life can be explained, illustrated and certain Scriptures committed to memory, or carefully marked in the Bible so any Christian can use his Bible in trying to lead the lost to Christ. One of the best plans is to give a personal testimony of what the Lord has done for you. Any Christian can do that much. The Apostle Paul did it often.

3. *Visiting.* When a Christian leaves his home or his business and goes to see a lost person, the very fact of this small effort gives him a good approach to that lost friend and a certain amount of resistance is already eliminated. It is evident to the lost man that the Christian really does have something. If the workers are afraid to try this individually, let two go together. They will mutually support each other. Besides, that was the way Jesus did it.

I have tried taking a deacon with me, or other layman, in this work, and just as soon as he is willing to take the lead with another, I pick a new man, then we have four at work instead of two. It is agreeably surprising how fast one can develop personal workers by this simple, bib-

lical method. Haphazard visiting may do some good, but directed visitation is much better.

II. MAKING DISCIPLES BAPTISTS

1. *Distinctive Doctrines.* Some preachers seem to be content to make disciples without feeling further responsibility. Obviously such preachers ignore two-thirds of the Commission. They leave their converts in swaddling clothes, without a spiritual home or a nurse's care.

Most of our country preachers, however, are like the one who said, "I always string the fish I catch". We should endeavor to baptize and enlist each of our converts. Then we face the task of teaching them to observe all things, which is another way of saying, making Baptists of them. "Dippin' 'em and drappin' 'em" is too often what really happens.

Distinctive Baptist doctrines must be preached from the pulpit often and without apology. If Baptists do not have distinctive teachings not held by others, then we are cumbering the ground, and only adding confusion to the ranks of Christianity.

We mention a few without discussing them: Salvation by Grace alone (no works at all); Soul Competency in Religion (no proxies); Soul's Direct Access to God (no pope); Equal Rights to All Believers (special privileges to none); To Be Responsible, the Soul Must Be Free (no force or coercion of the will); and a Free Church in a Free State. When our members are Baptists by definite and positive conviction, we may expect fresh out-

breaks of evangelism where lukewarmness prevails now.

Too many of our members are Baptists because their people are, or they joined to be with husband or wife, or due to convenience, or maybe without giving the subject any serious consideration. When converts join without positive convictions, we should not be surprised if they leave for another church of different faith and order.

The silly sentence, "It makes no difference what you believe just so you are sincere", could easily lead one to another church from the same sincerity. The pastors of half a century ago dwelt long upon the distinctive Baptist doctrines. They gave us a heritage we appreciate very little.

2. *Training Programs.* The regular programs prepared for the Training Unions will help to undergird the preaching program for making disciples Baptists because they were written to build better Baptists. By emphasizing the Training service, we are definitely indoctrinating our people. Certain study course books may be followed to strengthen our members in "the faith once for all delivered to the saints".

3. *Good Books.* Many country churches now have libraries. When the books have been carefully and cautiously selected, we can continue the indoctrination of Baptists. Fifty years ago several books appeared that built the Baptist faith. The authors wove our distinctive doctrines *into* and *around* good stories, which made them very readable and more interesting.

I refer to such books as: Theodosia Ernest, Jesse Allen, Woodrow Carlyle, Grace Truman, Mabel Clement, The Discovery of John Dumas, and the Little Baptist. We miss books like them today. There is little or nothing to take their places.

Our children and young people read something. It may be the funnies, yellow journals, or sex literature. They could just as easily read wholesome books, magazines, and religious periodicals, if they are made available.

A mud bath in filthy literature cannot easily be counteracted. Young minds are like sponges, they soak up almost anything they contact. A library in a country church will pay great dividends, if made convenient and kept constantly before the people.

III. USING THE GRADUATES

1. *Use Leaders Present.* The teaching, training, missionary and worship services in a country church call for workers, leaders, teachers and officers. The pastor who knows his people will be able to pick out individuals who possess skill for duties in certain specific positions. As pastor, he can usually make tactful connection with the right job and the right worker.

No program of any church can successfully be accomplished without dependable leaders. For instance, the Sunday School will be just as efficient as the officers and teachers make it. We could say the same thing of any other auxiliary, or agency of the church.

Therefore, we must first locate and train the leaders. Second, see that these leaders are in the jobs they can best fill. Third, let them know in detail the thing you wish to accomplish through conference and council. Fourth, ring the bell, beat the bushes, call them in, encourage and inspire the workers and keep a challenging aim before them toward which you are traveling.

2. *Find Others.* In nearly every country church there is a large section of the membership unenlisted and who show up only at funerals, revivals, or at Mothers' Day programs. They include some of our most promising prospects for leaders. They have material means. Usually they possess transportation. They need the church and the church needs them.

Jesus said something about going out into the highways and hedges and constraining them to come in. We are his instruments for getting the old members back as well as for reaching the lost.

The pastor will gather his workers, instruct them in the particular job, then lead them afield, and encourage them until the task is done. Preaching and prayer meeting attendance is built by this method, just like we work at Sunday School, Training Union and Woman's Missionary Union attendance. The next chapter is devoted to means and methods, plans and programs for enlisting the membership.

3. *Practice Stewardship.* A Missionary Baptist Church program that omits missions, either deliberately or carelessly, is a paradox, a contradic-

tion, a monstrosity. Yet, year after year, there are many country churches, purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ, that have no systematic plan of supporting missions.

They are missionary at heart and will give, if the pastor will preach a red-hot missionary sermon and see to it that somebody passes the hat. I've seen it done and have done a bit of it myself.

What we need is to put missions into our church program and work at the task of leading our people into the systematic Bible way of finance, so we can have a check to mail each month to Missions and Benevolences. We must not wait for the end of the year, or until the association meets.

Waiting until the end of the year is better than nothing, but the missionaries and orphans must eat every day in the year. Once-a-year giving would starve them all within a short time. The Co-operative Plan of giving meets the demands and cares of each Baptist cause according to actual needs.

IV. DON'T BEFOG THE GOAL

Unless the pastor is a careful observer and watches the progress of his program, he is likely to confuse the *means* with the *end* and consume all of his energies making new machinery and patching and oiling both old and new, instead of looking for results, the real end of Christian endeavor. A mower may look well and run smoothly, but unless it cuts the hay, it is only beautiful junk. A hay-baler must bale hay, the cornhusker must husk corn, the combine must clean and sack

the grain; otherwise sensible men pronounce them failures.

So it is with our church program. Unless our organizations and gatherings help to build up the members in the faith, and aid the lost in finding the Saviour, they fail in their main purpose. They become just so much rubbish, clutter up progress and make the heavenly chariot wheels drag heavily. We may have A-1 standards of merit on the walls, but we should be "ashamed" if we produce no results. This is no criticism of means, instruments, equipment, or devices.

It is merely a needed caution against becoming so interested in our processes, programs, equipment and organizations lest we forget that results are the end for which it was all created. A good way to keep from making this error is to visualize some reasonable results for your church for a year, or more in advance, make the best plans possible for realizing these results, and then watch for them as the program is being executed, or carried out.

Therefore, if a church is making converts all through the year, and not only at the "big meetin'," it may be pretty sure its program is keyed to the New Testament plan. These new Christians must be taught obedience to Christ's commands, which, we believe, is another way of saying, they must be made good Baptists. Just as soon as they have begun to mature in the faith, it is necessary to enlist them in the program of the church. Every Christian can and should be

a witness for the Lord. No one should be overlooked for worship and service. By keeping the main thing in mind there is little likelihood of one's getting lost in the procedures—machinery—and miss the goal, or the main thing for which churches were constituted.

CHAPTER VII

HOW TO ENLIST THE UNENLISTED

Before taking up the enlistment problems in detail, it is well for us to consider

I. THE NATURE OF A NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

1. *Union in Unity.* The Holy Spirit spoke through Paul in I Cor. 12:12, and said, "For just as the body is one and yet has many parts, and all the parts of the body, many as they are, form one body, so it is with Christ". We have all been baptized in one spirit to form one body, and simply put, that is the biblical way every New Testament Church is formed and grows.

There is a tie that binds our hearts to one another and to Christ, which is real and genuine, and like the human body, one member cannot be hurt without suffering on the part of the whole body. If a finger is cut, the physical body suffers. When sin fastens upon a church member that body, of which he is a member, is affected. Remember the story of Achan's sin (Joshua 7:20).

2. *Maturing the Saints.* We are born into the kingdom of God as spiritual babies. After the vote of the membership, we are baptized into a New Testament Church. What a bunch of babies the pastor sometimes finds in his church, and the tragic thing about it is that some never grow beyond the "creeper", or "romper" age, while a few remain spiritual dwarfs and demand a straight milk diet. That accounts for many of the church

“fusses” and “quarrels”. Great care, sympathy, tenderness and patience are required of the pastor in enlistment work.

3. *No Easy Task.* Because of the peculiar nature of a New Testament Church, the enlistment problem is not easy. What works wonderfully in one place, may require much adaptation in another community. However, human nature is pretty much the same everywhere. With a sympathetic understanding of the needs, the enlistment task, difficult as it is, will yield to proper treatment.

II. THE ENLISTMENT PROBLEM IS GROWING

Every year our statistician compiles figures to show that our number of unenlisted in Southern Baptist ranks is growing like an octopus with his slimy tentacles reaching into every community and church. A study of this program in my own churches showed an average of 25% of the roll were entirely gone from the neighborhood, most addresses of whom could not be located.

A diligent search by letter, friends, relatives, or otherwise, revealed that some had joined other Baptist churches and called for no letter. Some joined churches of another faith and order, while some reported they had been genuinely “converted,” and therefore asked for no letter when joining a church the second time. Some sent in nice contributions to the home church, while others followed our hint and called for their letters.

It will pay any pastor to check his church roll and search for his sheep. Another 5% to 15%

of my church members were in the community just waiting for the church to come after them. A few of them had petty grievances which they had fertilized and carefully cultivated. Others had no grievances at all—just out of the habit and indifferent. Many of them were ready to come back and only needed a good, warm, cordial invitation.

What a marvelous difference that unenlisted 5% or 15% would make in that little country church if they could just be persuaded to return. Attendance upon all services would automatically rise, offerings would increase, fellowship would bloom-out, and lost people would be more favorably impressed with the new life at the little one-room Baptist church down the road.

III. SOME SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

1. *The Key Man* to the solution of the unenlisted in the country church is the Shepherd of the flock. If he loves country situations and particularly his own people, he will find a way or make one. To use his country pastorate as a brief stepping stone to something more attractive, is to court complete failure in reaching the constituency. The better he understands country people, the easier the job will be. Particularly is this true in leading the men.

The pastor may not possess an outstanding personality, but the Holy Spirit will lead any man God calls to be a pastor in developing a usable quality of leadership for the men. His faith must know nothing akin to failure. He must believe in

God and his power to accomplish the seemingly impossible in the country. He must believe in his own people, and the task Christ set before them. With an interested, enthusiastic pastor to go ahead, the job is already well on its way to completion.

2. *There Must Be Some Plans*, devices, schemes, or techniques used in any effort at enlistment. Just which ones are best in every case may be the unknown quantity, but here are some that have been used and found workable.

(1) *Inform the People*. Baptist people are a peculiar people and will not follow far or long when they don't thoroughly understand. They may not demand information, but they are hard to move without it. The wise pastor will go into complete details with his church on any and every deviation from their custom.

He may start with his deacons, or use all the men together in small memberships. To let them have a part in making that program, usually will break down all or most of the opposition. When the men are agreed, then it may more successfully come before the church. All business matters will be decided in church conference, or the business session, but full and complete discussions may properly be had privately or publicly.

Never appear too anxious, or act hastily as if you were going to "put something over". Give them plenty of time, let them ask questions, which you or your men can answer. Use your bulletin, tracts, State papers, books, and sermons, but be

absolutely sure all understand the program, or plan, before it is adopted by the church.

Never be afraid to tell the whole truth of any matter to your church. Informed Baptists are great followers. My four-page, mimeographed, church bulletin was used to inform my people on all business of the church. I would tactfully suggest it first. Then discuss it informatively, without trying to "bowl them over" by sledge-hammer arguments.

I tried persuasion chiefly on my fields, and it worked nicely. The State paper is the best assistant pastor any church ever had. I don't see how I could pastor a country church without its regular weekly appearance in the homes of my people.

(2) *Stress the Doctrines.* Baptists are what they are today because of their doctrines in the past. Their distinctive teachings gave them their rightful place in the world. Unless Baptists maintain their doctrinal integrity, they merit no support and do not justify their existence as a separate denomination.

Dr. B. H. Carroll, the father of South Western Baptist Theological Seminary, and defender of the faith, hit the bull's-eye when he said, "The New Testament is the law of Christianity. All the New Testament is the law of Christianity. The New Testament is all the law of Christianity. The New Testament always will be all the law of Christianity". The New Testament is our all-sufficient guide in all matters of faith and practice. Baptist churches come more nearly up to the New

Testament pattern than any other churches on the earth. That's why we call them New Testament Churches.

Any Baptist preacher who doesn't believe this, should be honest enough to turn in his ordination papers, and institute a search for a genuine New Testament Church. Members of country churches are about as well indoctrinated as any group, but even that is not very complimentary. All too often our members appear confused, embarrassed, and ill at ease before certain errorists who can glibly "spiel" off their doctrines and quote Scripture that is supposed to substantiate those doctrines.

A series of Prayer Meeting studies on Baptist doctrines will introduce the subject and whet some appetites. Study courses in what Baptists believe will help wonderfully. The pulpit is the place for the bulk of this work to be done. We preachers must preach our doctrines.

Some church members could listen to their pastor for a whole year and then would not be able to give a good clear-cut reason for being a Baptist, and support it with appropriate scriptures. Much of this trouble may be placed in the pulpits of quite a few of our Baptist churches. Good tracts distributed at the close of some particular doctrinal sermon will help to clinch the message.

Brother pastor, Baptists will die without Baptist doctrine, and the devil is well aware of that fact. See to it that the members get it where you preach. Remember, however, that you can't antagonize and influence at the same time, so be

careful how you preach. An appeal to prejudice will close the mind, and a closed mind will miss your message.

(3) *Attend Denominational Gatherings.* It is exceedingly difficult to generate and maintain interest in a church without some fellowship or contact with other groups. Therefore, the pastor will arrange for his people to gather rather frequently in co-operation with other churches for the mutual good of the Lord's work.

The group plan, within the association for promoting Sunday school, Training Union, Brotherhood and Woman's Missionary Union work, offers the most practical opportunity. This plan is for the surrounding Baptist churches with whom we are already partially acquainted.

For illustration, our own Sunday school teachers and officers will usually be willing to take part on the program because there is only a small group in attendance. To hear what others are doing and how they are doing it will stimulate us to better efforts.

The next step-up is the Annual Meeting of the Association. Our messengers (not delegates—delegates possess authority to bind) and alternates will be selected and elected by the church and written on the Uniform Letter. Then all the visitors we can persuade to attend will go. When they return, their reports—and they certainly should be given opportunity to report—will kindle fires and fan the flames for all who did not see and hear first-hand.

If the Association is awake, it will hear concise reports of past efforts, definite plans for the new year, and preaching that will stir to action. The Association is the first unit of co-operative work among Baptists and goes far back into our history. If we are wise, we shall enthusiastically support it.

Much inspiration will come to our workers who attend the quarterly associational gatherings of the various church organizations. Regional and Divisional meetings will hearten the faltering leaders nearly every time, but we must be interested enough to expose ourselves. Don't forget what Thomas missed by being absent.

The State Convention should never be allowed to meet without one or more messengers from each country church being sent. The church could afford to pay all or a portion of the expense, because of the encouragement he will bring back to the people. At this Convention, we discuss the Lord's work co-operatively, vote new plans, and elect those charged with the details of carrying out those new programs. Then our church votes to adopt, or reject, those programs and governs itself accordingly.

That is the Baptist way of doing mission work. No country church can afford to be without at least one messenger to its State Convention. Most misunderstanding of co-operative efforts arises because of the lack of information, or because of misinformation. The State Convention of Sunday schools, Training Unions, and Woman's Mission-

ary Unions is greatly inspirational, and we need its contributions.

The influence of the Southern Baptist Convention is felt less than that of a state convention, because it is farther removed from the churches. For the same reason, the influence of a state convention is felt less than that of an association. However, as often as possible, a messenger ought to be elected and sent to the Southern Convention. It never fails to strengthen the faith and inspire those who attend.

Brother pastor, if the church is anti-missionary, omissionary, indifferent, self-satisfied, or bogged-down in a fuss, try these plans carefully and prayerfully before you come to the conclusion your work is done at "Old Mt. Harmony". You may have to haul your people to most of these gatherings, but, even at that, I really think it pays. It is best to denominationalize the rural churches.

(4) *Organize for the Task.* If I read my Bible aright, it is entirely possible to have a New Testament church without any organization whatsoever, even deacons or pastor; but this is no argument against the needed organization in every Baptist church. The only question is, how much do I need?

The only reason for any organization in a New Testament church is to localize responsibility for results—better results. If the organization of some unit does not, and will not, get results, it is only dead timber and needs a decent funeral.

Just because some other church has a series of organizations, is not sufficient reason for me to demand the same "gadgets" for my church. What's the use of putting a gas-saving device on my auto unless it really does save fuel or increase the mileage. One can have entirely too much "chromium-plate" on an automobile.

The usual organizations found in most country churches are Sunday school, Training Union, Woman's Missionary Union and, just as soon as the work for men is better understood, we may safely add the Brotherhood. Each one of these organizations has a specific job or task to perform.

The Sunday school is to teach the Bible and urge the individuals to practice its precepts. Bible facts alone are not sufficient. Training Union is to develop the Christians and mature them in the Christian graces. They must be developed from babes in Christ to full-grown men, when the "meat of the word" will be demanded and relished.

Woman's Missionary Union features a training program for the age groups and, at the same time, directs the matured ones in mission, stewardship, and evangelistic activities. The Brotherhood faces a similar activity task. They have no special program. Their program is the church program, and they are to help the pastor in carrying it to final conclusion.

(5) *Plan the Work and Work the Plans.* How may we enlist the members of a country church and bring the lost ones into the Sunday school? Good literature on this subject is readily and easily

available from our publishing house, the Sunday School Board, so only brief suggestions will be in order here. The late W. D. Hudgins had a workable technique for this business, and it ran about as follows: "Find 'em, fetch 'em, fix 'em, fasten 'em, follow 'em, finish 'em."

A census will reveal all possibilities in the community. Next, classify the information and give it to the teacher of the proper age to distribute specific responsibility for enlistment. Make a new class, or several, if necessary. The pastor will help to locate class rooms for these extra classes.

At times it becomes absolutely necessary to adjust the teaching force so as to put the right teachers with the right class. A square peg will not fill a round hole. Neither will a teacher of the primary age fit into an adult class. It takes real courage and grace to change a custom of long standing in any country church. The pastor will probably get "bawled out" and occasionally may be forced to resign within a few months, but even then, it pays.

I have seen more than one poorly attended Sunday school doubled in attendance within the space of a few months by an adjustment of teachers. Naturally the new pastor will make haste slowly in dealing with a more or less fixed custom of his church. He must know his people well enough to pick the right worker for a specific job.

While classifying the census for use, there should be adopted an aim, or a challenging goal.

The A-1 standard for Sunday schools furnishes a worthy incentive for development and accomplishment. Any country Sunday school can reach and maintain this minimum requirement. To reach the standard is one thing; to maintain it regularly as a program is another thing—the main thing.

IV. SOME INTEREST-PRODUCING ACTIVITIES

1. *Improve the Church Grounds.* Some country churches have been neglected so long that the buildings situated on the road are blotted out by the bushes and undergrowth. One must approach cautiously to avoid passing without seeing them.

A certain pastor accepted the call to a church in this condition and found the membership about equally divided over a previous pastor. So little constructive interest was shown in the church that full energies were free to engage in the "difference". In fact that church fuss was the liveliest and most interesting affair in that neighborhood. The new pastor was no expert in umpiring church fusses, but he did know a few things for sure about human nature.

Soon he called a meeting of the deacons and men one Sunday afternoon, and suggested that the church grounds be cleared, suitable shade trees left, or planted, lawn grass be sown, shrubs be set, flowers planted, and two sanitary rest rooms built. It was new, different and, therefore, refreshing for discussion. All were agreed (the first time in a good spell) and it was unanimously ordered at the next regular business meeting.

As was anticipated by the pastor, both sides of the "argument" were well represented. The Shepherd did little actual labor, but he did a fancy job of keeping the conversations on a real program for "our church" among both men and women. The undertaking was eventually completed to the joy and satisfaction of both groups, and to the improvement of the church grounds. Jobs were found for as many as possible in other ventures, the church program was kept first in their minds, and the "fuss" soon began to die for lack of cultivation.

2. *Maintain Cemetery Grounds.* The next project for the church, and the whole community, was to raise money for cleaning off the cemetery, fencing it, leveling it for lawn-mowers, and planting grass. When Decoration Day dawned in that community, the visitors were agreeably surprised to see the marvelous transformation in their "city of the dead".

It was a great day, the church was packed with people, and the tables fairly groaned beneath their palatable burdens. Interest picked up, something was "going on" now at the little country church that made every one proud he was a member.

3. *The Lord's Acres.* The next year the Lord's Acres was introduced as a church project. Several agreed to plant plots in cotton, for that was the money crop, and give the proceeds to the church. One man who had pledged \$10.00 to the church for the year, turned in a check on his plot for \$37.50, the biggest single annual church gift of

his life. There was a temptation to turn in only \$10.00, his pledge, and keep the difference, but with the Lord's help, he won the battle.

That fall, instead of owing the pastor most of his year's salary, they had accumulated enough to begin repairs on the church building proper. Next chapter will give more details, when church finance is discussed.

A new day was dawning in this rural community, because the pastor was not content to preach, eat, and leave the people Sunday night and be gone for two weeks. He was in that community from one to three times, visiting people, planning better programs, and conducting the weekly Prayer Meeting.

4. *Christian Social Life.* A pastor in another community led his church in a fellowship, or social program, that reached all ages of the membership. He could not personally direct everything, but he found capable members he could entrust with a good share of this responsibility. The church agreed to use a portion of their basement for a kitchen, and equipped it with electric range, ample dishes, and a sink was installed.

Of course, they had no running water, so they connected a pipe from the hand pump to the sink, and also one from the sink for the waste line and suffered little inconvenience for the dish-washing events, either summer or winter.

Movable partitions separated class rooms in the basement for the elementary grades. Collapsible tables were made and stored in that same base-

ment. They consisted of "horses" and twelve-inch boards, ten feet long. When a church supper, or banquet was wanted, it was an easy task to make ready and clean up afterwards.

The regular "split-bottom" chairs used in the class rooms were numerous enough to seat our social gatherings. The furnace-heated basement was utilized in the winter and in the summer the equipment could be moved outside.

July 4 was the usual big event for the church and community for a picnic. Pigs, goats or sheep would be barbecued, a big kettle of "burgoo" was prepared, and both of these supplemented by baskets of lunch, which resulted in a dinner fit for a governor, and a social event that could not be forgotten.

These events were climaxed by a religious service and the people went back to their homes feeling that it was the best community in the State. A certain deacon in that church was the moving spirit in this particular event. He put much into it, and got lots out of it.

Naturally, several committees were selected to look after all details. The community was so thoroughly permeated by the Christian ideals that honky-tonks and grog-shops found it impossible to tarry long there.

During the terrible depression, homes were scarce because of the many anxious to move into that community, price of land remained high although the soil was not very productive. This

same result may be expected in any rural community where the church is its center and an aggressive Christianity is constantly maintained.

5. *Church Library.* One evening a country pastor took the place of the sponsor of the Junior Union who happened to be absent. When their brief program was finished, he checked them by questions on the content of his sermons. To his surprise, he found they could recall some of his subjects, many of his texts, and all of his illustrations.

With this challenge he began to direct their minds to certain books in the church library. A note in the church bulletin, or an item in the regular announcements kept the most interesting books before the children. Different ones of the young people or adults would check the books in and out at Prayer Meeting or Sunday school. From the minutes of the Association, State and Southern Baptist Conventions, special programs could be prepared and the regular ones could be enriched and made more interesting due to the convenience of their library.

One boy led all the others in reading books from the church library. He is now in his college days. Just how much the books from that community church library helpfully influenced him, we may never know, but he has Christian convictions that were not broken, or neutralized during some years in army life. One boy's life constructively influenced toward the best things, is worth all the trouble and work a library will cost.

CHAPTER VIII

SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF RURAL CHURCH FINANCE

The only reason ever given for quarter-time and half-time churches is the lack of money to finance full-time programs. At times there may not be preachers enough, but my observation is that the country church with an adequate financial system remains pastorless very little, if any of the time.

Other reasons may account for the existence of part-time churches, but they are never mentioned. So, if we can solve this difficulty, the lack of finance, most of the country church problems will vanish into thin air.

I. THE BIBLE PLAN OF CHURCH FINANCE

1. *The Source Book.* The Bible, our Guide Book for all matters of faith, contains also the solution of the financial problem, the practice of stewardship. According to the Bible, God owns all "the cattle on a thousand hills", Psa. 50:10; "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein", Psa. 24:1; "The silver is mine and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts", Hag. 2:8.

By right of redemption, every Christian belongs to God, "For ye are bought with a price", I Cor. 6:20. God is owner and all Christians are stewards. Between God and man, man owns nothing; he merely possesses God's goods, and some day must render a strict account of his steward-

ship. "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." I Cor. 4:2. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Heb. 9:27. When a Christian is convinced that he is a steward and God is the real owner, he has come to the place where Jesus actually becomes Lord and Master, as well as Savior. Nearly every consecrated steward looks with favor upon tithing as a means of financing the Kingdom's work.

2. *Amount to be Tithed.* He is now ready to practice that relationship—Lord and servant—by bringing his tithes and offerings every first day of the week according to the divine plan. Outwardly this proves the sincerity of his love for Christ to the scoffing and gainsaying world about him. A farmer can tithe if he really wants to, just as easily as a man in any other business. It is only the increase of which a tithe is required, Prov. 3:9.

Books or simple records may be kept in order that we may know, and not leave it to chance. All costs, outside of family living costs, are legitimate deductions, such as fertilizer, labor, seed, and a reasonable amount for wear and tear of machinery and tools, but no living costs. The net amount, or difference, is what the Bible calls "increase". Some may cavil, complain, stall, argue and offer excuses, but none of them will stand the white light of God's judgment.

Space here will not permit full discussions of stewardship and tithing. Plenty of tracts, pamphlets, and books on these subjects are already in

print and may be had from any Baptist Book Store. The Bible was, is now, and will always remain our Source Book on these two subjects.

3. *The Tithe Meets Needs.* Tithes and offerings took care of religious worship before the Mosaic Law was given. Tithes and offerings were amply adequate during the period of the Law, or from Moses to John the Baptist. Tithes and offerings have cared for New Testament churches in the past, and where tried, are sufficient now.

If Jesus knew what He was talking about, tithes and offerings will meet all the needs until He comes back again. Beyond that event, we should not worry or be concerned about money. Tithes and offerings not only bountifully supply the necessary funds for a New Testament church program, but also protect the Christian against covetousness.

Many books and pamphlets have been written by enthusiastic and zealous individuals who have invented "sure-shot" financial schemes, plans and procedures, and additional ones are being generated every year. They are men's plans and merely serve to add more speed to the "merry-go-round" of featuring financial failures in church treasuries. Only one plan is "sure-shot" for a New Testament church, and that is outlined in the Bible. Now that we have tried everything else, let's give tithing a thorough test.

II. TELL THE PEOPLE

1. *Immediately After Baptism.* I was a member of a Baptist church for four years before I ever

heard "word one" about tithing, and when I did hear it, it irked and irritated me painfully and powerfully. In fact, I never recovered from it. I finally succumbed to it after several years of intense mental, physical, and spiritual suffering. The story of the evolution of one tither is a "plum" good 'un", but too long to relate here.

Suffice it to say that that good pastor sinned against God and me by not preaching stewardship and tithing before, or soon after, I came out of the baptismal waters. I realize now I was a very "covetous customer", but did not imagine it then. Any and all mature men and women born into the Kingdom and who must face for the first time their stewardship relation, have my deepest sympathy. The ordeal never kills, but does dig deeply where one lives.

The preacher, who rightly divides God's Word, will preach the doctrine of stewardship expressed in tithes and offerings, just as earnestly as he does salvation by grace alone, security of the believer, or any other Bible doctrine. The doctrine of missions as our mission should be on a par with stewardship, because missions today waits upon stewardship as expressed in our tithes and offerings.

My first pastorate had been held by stalwarts of the faith, but for some unknown reason, they had touched only lightly upon stewardship and missions, so that is where I began. I stood out boldly, like a sore finger, because of these subjects used, even though I could not equal them on the other doctrines.

2. *Leaders Practice Tithing.* The preaching from the pulpit must be emphasized in the teaching throughout the Sunday school. Teachers who do not believe in tithing may be satisfactory in some city churches, but they simply cannot be used in country Sunday schools. The teachers all wield a powerful influence and the wise pastor knows it and plans accordingly. Stewardship lessons are hard to learn.

It will take time, patience and courage to teach them until they have been learned. No one has learned in the highest sense until he is willing to put the lesson into practice.

3. *The Pastor Leads.* The expression, "what you are makes so much noise I can't hear what you say", certainly applies to tithing. The pastor who preaches and fails to practice tithing might as well "bay at the moon" for all the good he will accomplish. The members may never say it aloud, but their minds are mumbling "physician, heal thyself". Certainly here is one place we must show our faith by our works. Christians cannot long see their pastor tithe and not increase their contributions.

When the pastor tithes, he should next enlist all the deacons. A deacon who will not tithe may pass the collection plate efficiently every service, but his example will never convert any man to tithing. After the deacons are enlisted, the Sunday school teachers and officers are the next in order. Training Union, Woman's Missionary Union, and all church officers should be enlisted

first before individually approaching the remainder of the membership.

Frankly, I never did enlist all the members of any one of my churches, but I did see the number of contributors increase every year. Teaching and practicing Bible finance can never be discontinued. As new ones are added, they must be instructed and enlisted. Tithers need to hear messages on tithing for the same reason believers need to hear the Gospel. No apology need be made for either type of message.

III. AGREE UPON A SYSTEM

1. *Inform the Men.* A method that has been successful is to call a meeting of the deacons, and if few in numbers, include all your men who attend the regular services. This has been done on Sunday afternoon, also on a week night. Lead the discussion on a worthy, or aggressive program for the church. Then use a blackboard on which to itemize the finance necessary to promote the program wanted, or agreed upon in the discussion.

The wise pastor has already given the matter so much study and prayer, that he has all items in mind. Therefore, he naturally and easily leads from point to point as the brethren suggest, or hint at reasonable figures. Never be hasty, impatient, irritated, or try to force the issue. If the time is not right, postpone graciously, and build up the low places before you call another meeting. You know now where the low places are.

2. *For a Specific Illustration,* the 1943 Depart-

ment of Agriculture Farm Statistics, Nashville, showed corn, cotton, hay, potatoes, tobacco, wheat, barley, and lespedeza seed to be the principal crops of Lawrence, Giles, and Lincoln counties, with a total acreage of 393,585. The average income per acre was \$36.50. The effective buying income per capita, 1942, in Lawrence country was \$242.00. The minutes for 1944 and 1945 for these three associations revealed the following averages for all quarter-time churches listed: Annual budget \$498.00; annual pastor support, \$190.00; and membership, 107.

From these two studies, the following suggested budget was prepared for a quarter-time church in that section:

Financial Budget for a Quarter-Time Church

	Monthly	Yearly
1. Janitor service -----	\$ 4.00	\$ 48.00
2. Insurance premium -----	3.00	36.00
3. Ministers' Retirement Plan	.90	10.80
4. Fuel -----	2.00	24.00
5. Lights -----	1.25	15.00
6. Building repairs -----	3.00	36.00
7. Associational minutes -----	.50	6.00
8. Incidentals -----	3.30	39.60
9. Literature -----	8.00	96.00
10. Baptist and Reflector -----	3.00	36.00
11. Co-operative Program -----	8.33	99.96
12. Pastor support -----	30.00	360.00
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Totals -----	\$67.28	\$807.36

This suggested annual budget, \$807.36, divided by 52 Sundays, equals \$15.52 per Sunday of col-

lections needed. The Sunday offering divided by 100 members equals $15\frac{1}{2}c$ per member each Sunday of the year. The quarter-time churches in these three associations averaged 107 members each. Drop the 7, and use 100 as the base for convenience.

The best way to raise the above budget is for each member to make an offering of some sort every Sunday. If he misses a Sunday, he should make up for it when he does attend. Then when farm crops are sold, if he is not satisfied with his material gifts to the Lord, let him make up the difference while he has the cash.

Of course, all collections on Sunday should be passed to the regular Church Treasurer immediately. It will help to keep up financial interest if read at least monthly. Don't wait until the year ends to do it.

SUGGESTIONS AS TO—

How weekly offerings may be secured:	How yearly offerings may be raised:
1. Sell 3 or 4 eggs	1. Sell 1 very sm. ham
2. " $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. butter	2. " 1 med. shoulder
3. " 1 can of fruit	3. " 1 lge. middling
4. " 1 qt. of milk	4. " 5 avg. size hens
	5. " 16 dozen eggs
	6. " $1\frac{1}{2}$ bbls. corn
	7. " 4 gals. sorghum
	8. " 2 bu. Irish potatoes
Or do without—	9. " 3 bu. sweet potatoes
1. 3 soft drinks	
2. 3 candy bars	
3. 3 pkgs. chewing gum	
4. $\frac{3}{4}$ pack cigarettes	

5. 2 cigars	10. "	12 med. size
6. 1 can snuff		watermelons
7. 1 plug tobacco	11. "	16 lbs. butter
8. 1 picture show each 2 weeks	12. "	pig at weaning time

WHEN AND HOW TO GET IT DONE—

Have two or more committees (best givers) to call upon each church member some Sunday afternoon, explain the financial plan, have prayer (if impressed), ask if he is willing to assume some responsibility, and how much. Write down his amount, thank him, depart, and find the next one. "Let all things be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40). The above plan seems to be both "decent" and "orderly".

SOME POINTED SCRIPTURES

When give? "Upon the first day of the week", I Cor. 16:2.

Why give? "To prove the sincerity of your love", II Cor. 8:8.

What give? "According to that a man hath", II Cor. 8:12.

Where give? "Into the storehouse" (worship place), Mal. 3:10.

How give? "As he purposeth in his heart," II Cor. 9:7.

It is dangerous to trifle with God about our stewardship.

Give to avoid poverty: Prov. 11:24, "Withholding more than is meet".

Give to be enriched: Prov. 11:25, "The liberal soul shall be made fat".

Give to be faithful: I Cor. 4:2, "It is required of stewards".

Give because Jesus said so: Luke 6:38, "Give".

To be sure, the suggested amounts may be too high, or too low, depending upon "good" times, or "hard" times, but the items mentioned will, no doubt, remain the same. Take it before the Prayer Meeting crowd and let them ask questions freely, which, of course, the pastor will be prepared to answer sympathetically, informatively, and enthusiastically, unless some interested convert to the plan beats the pastor to it.

Now, it is ready for wide-spread distribution among all the membership. Give it a place of prominence in your church bulletin. If no bulletin, get some copies mimeographed, or printed, into the hands of all the members. No, it has not yet been adopted by the church, and the pastor will not let it come up for adoption until he has a pretty good idea it has become the choice of the overwhelming majority of the members.

Remember, it is *their* program and not the *pastor's* or the *deacons'*, when voluntarily accepted in open meeting after full publicity. Once adopted heartily by the church, the job of getting it subscribed is half over.

3. *Building the Lord's Treasury.* How can we enlist the members and make the church treasury, or church budget, or church financial plan, or whatever you choose to call it, a reality? The next step will succeed or fail, depending upon how well the "make-ready", or preparation has been done. No one procedure in subscribing the budget is recommended to the total exclusion of all others.

One method is to set a day for it. Preach an appropriate sermon and at the close, give all present an opportunity to fill out cards, (supplied beforehand) and drop them into the plates as they come by, or sing a song and let each one come by the table before the pulpit, on which is an open Bible, and place them there. Have your best givers instructed to be back at the church at 2 o'clock, check signed cards against the church roll, then go out by twos to call on those absent from morning worship. Those not located Sunday afternoon will be seen by some of the workers that week.

Whatever has been accomplished so far is a good beginning. It must be kept constantly before the people throughout the year. Members who will not sign for a tithe, will be asked to make a pledge. Some will do neither one. That is why it is an everlasting task and cannot be relaxed even for a few months.

Some country communities have had so little teaching along this line that it is not wise to try cards, or an every member canvass. I had one like this. We used the sermons, class-teaching,

tracts, personal letters to members, bulletins, and every other means except pledge cards. The offerings doubled and mission gifts were multiplied by three. Eventually they will accept a real every member canvass.

IV. HOW TO CARRY ON

1. *Keeping Records.* One church treasurer kept the records on his shirt cuff, made his reports, and had his shirts laundered. No one doubted his honesty and integrity, but such a lack of system in bookkeeping inspired poor giving. He voluntarily resigned and a new man was elected.

The pastor saw to it that a bound book was used for all financial reports and that they were read in detail each month at the regular business meeting. On one page, the money collected each Sunday was dated and entered. If some one gave money through the week, his name, amount and date were all entered. When added this gave all money received for that month. To it would be added the previous month's balance. On the right hand page, each check was recorded, who got it, and why, or for what. This page added and subtracted from the left-hand page showed the new balance, or what was left with which to begin the new month.

All payments were fully and freely discussed at the business meeting and the very next Sunday, the bulletin carried that financial report, item by item. To that publicity may be attributed most of the credit for doubling the amount of gifts for

the next year at that little church. These financial reports became a part of the history of that church just as much as receiving and dismissing members.

2. *Constant Publicity.* The bulletin always kept the church informed on the exact financial progress. At the end of each month, everyone knew whether we were ahead of our goal, behind, or just "holding our own". If we lagged a bit, usually some member would suggest we do something about it. One pastor was told by his treasurer that if the usual check went to missions, there would not be enough to pay the pastor's monthly salary.

The pastor was wise, and far-sighted, and said, "Send the mission check without delay. I'll make out". The mission check was mailed, and that Wednesday night at business session, the treasurer's report showed a deficit of \$15.00 on the pastor's salary. Immediately a deacon arose and said, "I move we pass the hat and get enough to pay our pastor in full. He must live like the rest of us". Promptly, that pastor said, "Do I hear a second to that motion?" A second was heard. The hat was passed and the pastor paid. The point is, he knew they would be more forward to pay him than to pay the mission obligation.

If the pastor will see to it that his church is positively missionary, somehow the Lord will care for that pastor. Some pastors have erroneously reasoned that if they pushed the mission offering, there would not be enough to pay their salaries. If Missionary Baptist churches don't give to missions, they will starve their pastors.

CHAPTER IX

ORGANIZING A RURAL CHURCH

I. WHY ORGANIZE?

1. *New Testament Practice.* As already suggested, it is possible to have a New Testament church without officers, or organization, but the divine pattern provides for both. The church Jesus built was an organism. It fairly pulsed with life, because it was filled with the Holy Spirit. It was an organization, because it met, transacted business, and possessed officers. Argument against organizing a church is argument against the New Testament practice.

2. *Distributes Responsibility.* All organizations in a church are simply means to an end. They are vehicles for carrying loads in the activities of that church. They are not the power house itself, but, the lines over and through which the power must move in doing a church's business.

The work of a church must be done by the individuals of whom it is composed. There is no other way. To use individuals effectively, it is necessary to distribute and localize responsibility. "What's everybody's business, is nobody's business" can be righted only when certain people have definite specific responsibility.

That is where organization comes into the picture. We may differ as to the amount of organization needed, but not on the principle of it.

3. *To Use Members.* Through the plan of organization, we use the church members. The more we can use the better it is for the members. The only way into the kingdom of God is by the new birth. Therefore, we have immature, undeveloped, and inexperienced people, spiritually speaking, who must be matured in the Christian graces.

We may be highly skilled in worldly wisdom, but the Bible says we are "babes in Christ", and have need of spiritual food and exercise. The saddest sight a pastor sees is that the overwhelming majority of his members are immature and unskillful with the word. This fact partially explains the weak, insipid, unchanging programs of so many churches.

II. HOW MUCH ORGANIZATION?

1. *What is Needed.* This is a reasonable and practical question that can be answered only after the facts are known. To prescribe here before the facts are in, is like a doctor's giving medicine before diagnosing the case, both may be disastrous to the patients. Well, how much organization should a church really have? It should have just exactly what it needs—no more. The type of building, the size of the membership, and the development of the members are three vital factors.

It would not be the part of wisdom to demand a fully departmentized Sunday school in a one-room church building with a possible constituency of 100 in that community. Neither is it wise to begin Sunday school, Training Union, and Wom-

an's Missionary Union all at the same time, when leaders for only one can be found.

2. *Start With One.* The best policy is to begin with one of these usual organizations, put all you have into it, and keep it built up until the leaders can carry on without the pastor's energies. Then he can be free to look for additional leadership material, which he will develop and train for the next unit.

It may take a year, or longer, before the church will be ready for this next step, which might be a Woman's Missionary Society. My suggestion is that it is far better to have one strong organization in a church than three or four weak "wobbly" ones.

3. *Complete the Needs.* Nearly every country church can grow to where it will need a Sunday school, Training Union, Woman's Missionary Union, and Brotherhood, the usual organizations found in live growing churches.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

The class unit of organization for the Sunday school will be best in most of our country churches. Some few will out-grow this method, and need the departmental plan. Minimum officers for the class unit school are: Superintendent, Associate, Secretary, Chorister, or Song Leader, and Pianist. If the children can be found, a teacher should be provided, for each age group through the Intermediates. Then just as many classes for young people and adults as are needed to reach the members

and prospects. The wise emphasis today is upon small classes.

TRAINING UNION

It is entirely possible that one union is all that can be mustered for a beginning. As it grows, others may be added until Story Hour, Junior, Intermediate, Young People, and Adult Unions have been provided. General officers would be: Director, Associate, Secretary, Song Leader, Pianist, and Presidents or Sponsors for each Union. The Training Service was intended for all ages in the church membership. Therefore, as soon as possible organize the adults and the others will materialize before, or by the time, the pastor is ready with consecrated leaders.

WOMAN'S MISSIONARY UNION

This organization played an important part in financing the mission programs sixty years ago in our churches. They are substantial supporters of the church financial plan today. A society can and should be the first step in forming a union. The other units will come as capable leaders are available. Start with your most capable woman for the society's president.

BROTHERHOOD

A couple of good men of vision and consecration is all that is needed to begin a Brotherhood. Unlike all other church organizations, the Brotherhood has no special program, no prescribed courses of study, and no seals or diplomas. Their

program is all the church program, therefore, they are not short on duties.

The Brotherhood is not like civic and social organizations whose main concern is fellowship and food, when they gather at fixed intervals and write their names in the "immortal gravy". Brotherhood fosters fellowship all right, and occasionally has a feed, but that is by no manner of means its chief business.

The Brotherhood is made up of men whose business is to help the Pastor carry out the church program. Individually, and two by two, the men must be assigned specific jobs that men can do, if the Brotherhood is to live and prosper.

Men cannot long be interested unless they may become active. Men can usher, receive the offerings, and occupy benches, but these same men can bring new people to the services, enlist the members in giving, and talk to the lost about surrendering to Christ. Mature men will usually respond to a challenge. Brother pastor, challenge your men!

THE SHEPHERD

Sheep will stray even when the Shepherd is around. It is foolish to think they will do better when he is gone. No church can afford to be without a pastor. The New Testament procedure is "ordain elders in every city". Modern methods have no improvement on the divine order. Somewhere, God has a pastor for each one of his churches. Get busy and locate God's man.

DEACONS

Pastors first, and then deacons, is the Spirit's way. Only seven deacons were, under divine pressure, selected and set in the First Baptist Church at Jerusalem, though there were thousands of members before the Holy Spirit stopped counting them. If the Spirit knew seven were enough for that multitude of members, we wonder sometimes if we, in this Twentieth Century, have not slightly overdone the job of ordaining deacons.

Many deacons are ordained that never "deake", just as many preachers are ordained who never preach. God's Spirit makes no mistakes. At times God's children do make mistakes. Deacons, along with pastors, are the only New Testament church officers whose qualifications and duties are prescribed.

CHURCH TREASURER

Judas was the Treasurer of the first New Testament church and definitely had no end of difficulty in keeping the church's money separated from his own. To be blunt and biblical, he stole from the bag.

Very few church treasurers ever go wrong with the money, but as a protection against that few, and to avoid the very appearance of even suspicion, some country churches elect a committee of from 3 to 5 men, at least, two of whom will always be present to count all collections in the presence of the treasurer, and make a note of the amount, or actually deposit the money in the bank,

and pass a carbon copy of the deposit ticket to the treasurer.

This procedure seems to be sane, sound, and sensible. It has come about chiefly because the treasurers have requested or demanded it, so as to distribute responsibility. No honest treasurer ever needs to feel offended at this method of safeguarding the Lord's money.

CHURCH CLERK

The clerk is the official historian of the church and must keep accurate, readable accounts of every business meeting. Dates, details, and moderator should be listed. Comments by the clerk should at most be very few, just the plain items of business are necessary. All resolutions and financial reports should be "word for word", in the minutes.

A bound book is best. Old minute books should be safely filed for future reference. Few Baptist churches with a century's existence have preserved their complete history. Baptists make history, but preserve very little of it.

TRUSTEES

In order to comply with the laws of our State, we must elect trustees to hold legal title to real property. Three or more can be elected for this purpose, and their successors should be elected immediately upon their dismissal.

OTHER OFFICERS

The officers mentioned are usually found in all of our churches, but others may be added and their duties specified by the church. The church is final authority on matters of polity and practice. Polity and practice must be in line with our doctrines. Our doctrines come from the New Testament which is our only Guide Book on all these matters.

III. WAITING FOR THE POWER

1. *The Spirit's Power.* When the officers have been carefully chosen and duly elected by a church, and the organizations set up, we still need something else. The best machinery ever invented will be worthless unless the power is turned on. Our officers and organizations need the power turned on, or their best efforts will be disappointing.

Work done in the energy of the flesh may look all right to the world, because it judges by the outward appearance. God looks beneath it all. He looks on the hearts. I have no monopoly on plans or schemes for turning on the power. I just know we need, and must have it. I know of one church that waited for 10 days in prayer before the power descended.

That power is still available and I think the formula for getting it has never been changed. God has always used human instruments in doing his work. He is using them today. So that brings us right back to the leaders, officers, teachers, and individuals who compose all organizations.

2. *Consecrated Christians* are the need of our churches. Christians whose lives are surrendered to the Lord. Christians who are willing and submissive to the Spirit's promptings. Christians who put the kingdom of God first. Too many of us permit the "cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches to choke the word", and we become unfruitful servants.

Lack of consecration, or down right sinfulness, or both, account for the poor attendance upon the worship services of the churches. The unoccupied benches on Sunday night shout loudly our devotion to the world. The great numbers of church members who practice no systematic plan of giving indicate the presence of covetousness in its most violent stage.

The more our members abide in Christ the more effective will be our witness among a wicked and perverse generation. The Spirit prefers a clean vessel in his work.

CHAPTER X

A CO-OPERATING RURAL CHURCH

I. A KINGDOM UNIT

1. *Why Baptists Hesitate to Co-operate.* Because of the peculiar nature of their democratic government, and also on account of their almost universal record of persecution by other religious bodies, Baptists have been remarkably slow in developing any system whereby they could work together in spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Baptists are not naturally stubborn or hard-headed about working together, but unfavorable conditions under which they have lived through the centuries—sometimes they barely existed—have made them somewhat suspicious, or over-cautious, concerning “co-operative efforts”.

Even the district association, our first effort of co-operation, was slow developing and then it was taken with a “grain of salt”. Conventions, both state and southwide, had to literally fight their way into the good graces of our Baptist people. And until this good day you will find the word “association” instead of “convention” used in the name of some state organizations.

At present we have small groups of doctrinally sound Baptists still refusing to have anything to do with “conventions” and their plans, preferring to do their mission work on what they prefer to call “direct plan, or method”.

We have great sympathy for them because we know the underlying reason or cause, and freely

and gladly grant them the privilege of doing their business in their own way, which right we reserve for ourselves. We have positive convictions on co-operation among churches in doing mission and benevolent work. As we read our New Testament, that seems to be the plan of the apostolic churches.

2. *New Testament Mission Boards* a tract by H. B. Taylor. "Webster's new International Dictionary defines a board thus: 'A number of persons, appointed or elected, to sit in council for management or direction of some public or private business or trust'. As thus defined you will find both a Home Mission Board and a Foreign Mission Board in the Book of Acts.

"When the work in the Home Field began to grow and assume such proportions, that it needed to be directed, then the apostles began to function as a Home Mission Board. As the gospel had been committed by the Master to them as a trust, they sat in council and appointed two of their number, Peter and John, to go down to Samaria and direct the mission work being done down there. Acts 8:14. That is the first Home Mission Board. It was composed of the 12 apostles. Its headquarters were in Jerusalem. This Board sent out missionaries. This Board directed or managed mission work. This Board was the agency through which was distributed the money contributed by Antioch and other churches, for the poor saints in Judea, during the great famine. Acts 11:30. *Note well that the church at Antioch sent no money direct to any church in Judea.*

“Peter and John and the other apostles had travelled all over Judea and knew the field well. They had also had large experience in handling public funds. Acts 4:35. They were trustworthy. So the money given by the church at Antioch for the famine-sufferers in the churches of Judea, was sent to ‘the elders,’ the men who composed this Home Mission Board and they distributed it according to the needs of the folks.”

3. *Utilizing the Units.* Every New Testament church is a unit in the kingdom of God with orders from Jesus as its head to disciple, baptize and teach those baptized disciples to observe all things. It is a kingdom privilege as well as a command to have a part in furthering that kingdom by preaching the gospel to every creature, irrespective of color, creed, or condition. What we need is a kingdom vision. If we can see the fields white to harvest and love the Lord as much as we profess, then we shall never be content to sit idly by and do nothing about it.

Churches in agreement upon doctrines, polity, and practice should have no trouble pooling their efforts and laboring together with Jesus Christ. There may be honest differences of opinion as to the method of missions which amount to convictions, but there can be no question as to whether we shall, or shall not, be missionary. That much is fixed with Missionary Baptists.

II. WHY SOME DON'T CO-OPERATE

1. *Lack of Understanding* is at the bottom of this matter, however, real prejudice often-times enters

into the lack of co-operation. Baptists are pretty good followers of their pastors and when confusion, prejudice, and bitterness dominate them we may expect opposition, indisposition, or no position. Much progress has been made in the past quarter of a century in changing the peoples' attitude toward combining our efforts because it has been done on the voluntary basis.

When we ever get it across to our masses and their leaders that a New Testament church is a court of last resort in every co-operative venture from which there can be no appeal, we may expect them to warm up, hitch up and hike out to accomplish the task. The State Baptist paper is a mighty instrument in helping to accomplish this job. It should be in the church budget and sent to each home where there is a member.

2. *Intense Individualism* is a powerful factor that sometimes tips the balances against all co-operation. Frankly that is one reason why I am a Baptist—the individual is never lost sight of in the work. Individualism within itself is not a bad characteristic. However, it must be understood and reckoned with in all Christian endeavor. That is why we make special efforts to cultivate the acquaintance of those in places of leadership and inform them carefully. By this method we anticipate the trouble and head it off before it develops.

3. *Prolonged Seclusion* of the churches because of poor roads for travel and little or no modern methods of communication have been contributing factors in keeping our churches separated in fel-

lowship and practice. The district association once a year furnished about the only gathering where the churches could fraternize, fellowship, and feed together. With good roads, busses, autos, trains, and airplanes, together with telephones, telegraphs and air-mail communication, distances have been almost eliminated.

Rivers, mountains and swamps no longer form barriers. Today we are living very, very close together—and becoming better acquainted. Mutual acquaintance inspires hope, confidence, and trust, and mean suspicions and prejudices die a natural death due to a lack of nourishment.

4. *Missionaries and State Workers Must Take the Initiative* in cultivating our people, even to the extent of inconveniencing themselves, if necessary to win their confidence. State workers and missionaries must remember that they are the servants of the churches and not bosses, or executives, by any manner of means.

We are ambassadors for Christ and must be careful of our attitude and conduct lest our Master and His Kingdom be misrepresented. Even the crudest, carping critic of co-operative work can be softened by kindness and a humble Christian spirit.

III. CARRYING OUT THE GREAT COMMISSION

1. *Commission With His Churches.* The Commission as such was not given to the apostles, but deposited with the little church Christ formed while here on the earth and which He purchased

with his own life's blood. Jesus promised His church perpetuity therefore, it will continue until He comes again. When John wrote the Revelation, he was probably the last of the twelve apostles, and yet he saw Jesus walking in the midst of the candlesticks, which are His churches.

He, in like manner, is with them today, and counting on every last one of them to do what it can it making His gospel known to the whole world. The gospel must be preached for a witness and then cometh the end. The responsibility is ours. We cannot shirk it, without proving traitor to Him who redeemed us from our sins. A New Testament church has no choice. It is not a New Testament church unless it is missionary. That is one of the acid tests.

The question is not whether my church will be missionary, but to what extent? Once flourishing churches, wearing the Baptist name, are now dead or dying because they refused to function according to the Spirit's leading. We, too, shall perish as churches, if we cease to be missionary. The world is battle-weary, head-groggy, but heart-hungry for the New Testament message.

2. *First Co-operative Unit.* The associational gathering is the first unit of co-operative life of Baptists. It is close to the churches and therefore has more authority than any other co-operative group. It affords opportunity for fellowship, worship, inspiration and practical planning for the new year's program in that district or county.

The churches see and hear first-hand the results of their pooled or co-operative efforts when their very own missionary makes his report. He was selected and elected by their association and paid by them in co-operation with the State Mission Board. He reports to both but is "hired and fired" by the association and not the State Mission Board. The State Executive Secretary is no boss of Baptists and their work. He is only the servant of the churches charged with a heavy responsibility of carrying out their desires and wishes.

When a church, too weak financially to maintain its program, wants help from the State Board, that church calls its own pastor, surveys its field, gets the signatures of the Moderator and Clerk of the Association and files its request with the State Board. The recommendation of the Association (because of its acquaintance with the real facts) is sufficient to get the requested help, provided any money is in that particular fund.

So we see the churches not only collect the mission funds, but also exercise their authority in spending those funds. This is what we mean by co-operating in Baptist mission work.

3. *Growing Co-operation.* Many of our rural churches have never fully understood our co-operative plan of doing mission and benevolent work, therefore, they have been slow to contribute their money freely. They are missionary at heart, but they lack the information. Of course, I realize we still have in our church membership some who

are anti-missionary, and omissionary but they are a small minority. More of this trouble is with us pastors than with the churches. No church will hastily and enthusiastically "steam-roller" its mission-neutral pastor. He will be respected even though he is in the wrong.

My plan to interest my churches and lead them into co-operation is to have them represented at all meetings where the work is presented. This means Sunday school, Training Union, Woman's Missionary Union, and Brotherhood associational and regional gatherings. We would regularly elect messengers to the annual Associational, State, and Southern Baptist Conventions. The information and inspiration those messengers brought back to the churches gave us vision and stirred us to do something about furthering the kingdom.

No New Testament church should be content to sit on the side-line doing nothing while others are engaged in the task of gospelizing the world. Surely the Christian spirit can give us the desire and disposition to want to work with other churches of like faith and order.

CHAPTER XI

WHEN IS A RURAL CHURCH SUCCESSFUL?

Very little is written in the Bible about success as such. It is mentioned, but not stressed. Faithfulness seems to be the divine requirement, rather than success. We may not be very successful in this life, but we can all be faithful. And yet we are in a world where success and failure measure our movements to such an extent that I think we are justified in searching the Bible for the divine standard or measuring-stick of our efforts as servants of our Lord and Master.

We may not find definite pointed rules, but we should find general principles to guide us in our polity and practice—maturing and developing the saints. When Jesus gave His church His command to make disciples, baptize them and teach them to practice all things, we believe He included the means necessary in the way of plans, procedures, programs, and techniques for accomplishing His specific order of all time.

Baptists believe this and have practiced it from the beginning of all co-operative ventures. We have varying degrees of progress in our rural churches all the way from zero, up to aggressive flourishing congregations. But our question is, when is a country church successful? Some people think country churches can't be successful, but they just don't know country churches.

I. ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS

1. *By Distributing Responsibility.* Organization in a church does not guarantee success any more than it does in secular affairs. But there must be system, if we are to do things "decently and in order". Jesus used system in feeding the multitudes both times. He methodically distributed responsibility when He set in the church first apostles. As the needs arose, deacons were next set in the church. Therefore, we conclude that necessary machinery should be set up to effectively carry on the Lord's business.

Sunday schools, Training Unions, and Woman's Missionary organizations have been with us now until we consider them almost, if not altogether, necessary requisites. Recently the Brotherhood has been projected to interest, inform, and use the men in all church endeavor as the women, in missionary enterprise.

The pastor must use his own judgment in when and how best to bring into operation these instruments of progress and development. Where they are dead or missing, I usually begin with Sunday school and Woman's Missionary Society, and follow with Training Union and Brotherhood as quickly as consecrated wisdom dictates.

2. *For Results.* Frankly, the goal of every rural Sunday school should be its own church members plus all other people not attending some other school. But seldom, if ever, have I seen the goal actually reached. Therefore, I would suggest that reaching an average attendance of 75% of total

church membership would be a success, but the goal, or ideal, would be every member in attendance.

The goal of Training Union attendance may be less than that of the Sunday school, because it is limited to the church members. We think of training for Christians only. When we reach two out of three church members in attendance in the training service, we shall have accomplished good success.

An attendance of 66 2/3% based upon the church membership is, in our judgment, as good as 75% for the Sunday school. It may be even better, for the constituency of the teaching service is so much greater in many instances. Naturally, the ideal is every church member in the training service.

The Woman's Missionary Society will, of course, be limited to the mature women. How many of them may we depend upon for usefulness? Certainly a few will be incapacitated for attendance upon the regular meetings due to small children, care of dependent relatives, and secular duties beyond the home.

Allowing for these, we believe it is possible to enlist 66 2/3% of the women, or two out of three. For each of the auxiliaries, we would aim at the same goal. However, it will probably be easier to reach three out of four children, than two out of three women.

When we come to dealing with the men, whether we have a Brotherhood or not, we should set a

worthy goal, if we would challenge them. Few rural churches have a Brotherhood, but they all have men. Therefore, instead of a meeting, we will set a goal for enlistment in some activity of the church's program, such as, visiting, advertising, boosting, and bringing people to the services—all the services.

We have unintentionally over-looked the men in much of our church program, but God does not. He has always used men. He wants men today. Suppose we say we shall be successful, if we can get two out of three men in our church engaged in ushering, advertising, visiting, boosting, and bringing people to the various services.

This is considerably above our present level, but we must not be content to be "just average", "moderate", or even, "tolerable" in any of the Lord's work, and certainly not in Bible teaching.

II. WORSHIP SERVICES THAT SUCCEED

1. *Magnify Worship Hours.* Many Christians put service above worship, or first with the Lord. We appreciate their zeal, but not their knowledge. In the visit of the wise men, the Spirit said, "they fell down and worshipped him", and then they followed with service. We believe worship comes first with God, and is one of the fine arts. Right here is where we need to pause, and take stock, before we proceed farther.

No service, however fine, will take the place of humble, devoted worship. Therefore we magnify both worship hours on Sunday and the mid-week

gathering. Of all the church services, these should take first place. If only Sunday school or preaching can be attended, by all means, be there for the Worship hour. The same thing is true of the night services. Worship, or the preaching hour, must come first.

Many rural churches never did have the Prayer Meeting, but that is principally due to the absentee pastor. How can the sheep follow an absent shepherd? Custom seems to have dictated two hours of worship on Sunday and a mid-week prayer hour. I am not arguing for custom, but if we are to properly commemorate the resurrection on the first day of the week, two periods of worship and adoration of Him who redeemed us should not be burdensome.

Anything less than a full-time church cannot easily maintain worship services each Sunday. Efforts have been made in that direction, but so far we have not observed much enthusiasm from these efforts. Joint-pastorates promise a better day in that respect, but that will come slowly.

2. *The Whole Family.* The aim or ideal in worship should be every church member in every worship service unless providentially hindered. This is what we call the resident membership, but there are differences of opinion as to who a resident member is. We would say it is anyone who lives near enough to walk, or who has transportation sufficient to make the services. What should be the requirement for success in attendance upon these services? Surely not less than we expect at

Sunday school—75% of the members in attendance.

Auditoriums in some city churches will not seat 35% of their members, but not so with country churches. Nearly every one of them can seat their entire membership any day they show up. With three-fourths of our members regularly worshipping every preaching day, we may expect decided growth in Christian consecration.

III. EVANGELISTIC SUCCESS

1. *Make Disciples.* Jesus said He came to seek and to save that which was lost. This example together with His explicit command to make disciples leaves no doubt about evangelism's being of prime importance to every church. If we have complete organizations and great crowds attending the preaching, but no Spirit-born conviction and conversion accompanying our efforts, and this continues, surely something is wrong.

For Jesus said "And I if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me." It may take several months for a church to get to the place where the Spirit can work in and through them in reaching the lost, but any church that doesn't report a baptism for 12 months should call a conference and tarry with the Lord until the answer comes. Regardless of whatever else we may do, we must make disciples and baptize them.

2. *By My Spirit.* The aim of every church should be to gospelize, or evangelize every lost person in the community. I mean the gospel

should be taken to him privately or publicly. Since man was made with the power of choice, and Baptists believe the soul to be responsible must be free, therefore, no force or coercion can be used in making disciples. In fact, we feel that over-persuasion by a magnetic personality, or shrewd scheming with a series of questions and answers, is entirely out of place in making disciples.

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts” is God’s way. Therefore, we are not required to make every one a Christian, but we are required to take the gospel to every creature with earnest enthusiasm, interest, and the fear of God. The results must be left with Him. This should be our goal or holy ambition whether we ever accomplish it or not.

3. *Every Generation.* While trying to reach our aim, we could count ourselves successful if we are every year reducing the number of lost in the community. A census every two or three years would show exactly our standing. People are moving each year, and children are passing into accountability, both of which increase the number of lost. Many a rural pastor will find this a real eye-opener if he will check the situation in each of his fields.

IV. STEWARDSHIP SUCCESS

1. *The Tithe.* All blood-bought children are stewards and Paul said by inspiration that it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful. Christians have no choice in this matter. Their responsibility is fixed. They may be faithful or unfaithful, but must render an account some day.

All one has is God's, but He trusts us with the possession and use of nine-tenths of it for our good and His glory. One-tenth is His as a minimum in furthering the Kingdom, and also as a test of the sincerity of our love. Giving is a grace like love, faith and knowledge, and is God-given. Every Christian possesses it, even though latent or undeveloped.

2. *For Each Member.* The aim of every church should be the enlistment of every member in its financial program, according to his or her ability. It is not fair to permit a few to bear all the financial burden and get all the blessings.

The individual Christian needs the spiritual growth which comes through giving more than his church needs his gifts. None is too poor, according to the Bible, to support his church. Much patience and great teaching are required right here. Every one a consistent, consecrated tither should be the church's desire.

3. *Three to Four Practicing.* A minimum requirement for success here should be not less than three out of four members tithers, or regular and proportionate givers to the church budget, whatever that is. When 75% of the members are enlisted in giving, it will not be hard to divide liberally with missions and benevolences.

The amount or percentage of the budget that should go outside of the community will have to be decided by the circumstances controlling each church. Surely 10% would be a minimum, with 35% a possible attainment.

Any country church reaching, teaching, training its members and leading them in worship, in winning the lost, and financially supporting a full-time program, should be considered successful.

How successful is mine? What am I neglecting? Where can I build up the low places? Have I unconsciously drifted into a rut? These and other questions ought to help us place emphasis in the right spot.

CHAPTER XII

THE SHEPHERD'S CALL

I. GOD CALLS

1. *The Divine Call.* Certain groups of religious people have nothing to do with any "Divine Call" in selecting their preachers. Some class preaching as a profession only, along with teaching, practicing law, and medicine. They select the ministry as a profession and treat it as such and smile at the idea of the Spirit's having anything to do with putting one into preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Others do not regard either deacons or preachers as New Testament officers. Any and all of their male members may preach if they choose to.

Baptists have from apostolic days believed and respected the Spirit's part in calling men into the ministry. We believe one without positive conviction on the "Divine Call" should never enter the ministry. The very first question of the presbytery is "Have you felt the call to preach? Relate briefly that experience".

Some Baptist churches license certain men, who show talents or abilities toward the ministry, which is nothing more than a written testimony that the home church believes in him and recommends him as a preacher or exhorter, and hears him exercise his gift. Frankly, I care very little personally for the licensing custom.

Anyone who feels impressed to preach should preach. He doesn't need a license to preach. If

the Lord has called him, he will eventually be able to demonstrate it, and some church will extend a call. Until a church extends a call why should one want to be ordained any way? The chief consideration is, has the Spirit called? If He has, by all means, yield. God makes no mistakes. But unless one is positive he has a call to preach, he should never attempt the task.

Many consecrated Christians feel impressed to do some type of Christian work, but have the mistaken idea that one must be "ordained" to give full time to Christian endeavor. Some of the most efficient church workers I have ever known were laymen or laywomen.

2. *Bible Examples.* Some very outstanding Bible instances should enlighten our minds as to the divine call: The sixth chapter of Isaiah is a thrilling account of his call and consecration to the ministry. Jeremiah's call and enduement is vividly described in the first chapter of the book bearing his name. In John's gospel, chapter one, verses six and thirty-three, the brief and pointed call of John the Baptist is outlined. Paul was converted and chosen for the ministry on the road to Damascus. All are fundamentally alike, in that the Spirit calls, and yet differing in details of circumstances governing each individual.

II. GOD CALLS FOR TIME

1. *How Much Time?* The same God who calls men into the ministry is the One that decides on the time to be devoted to that ministry. Right

here is where we come upon a diversity of opinion among country preachers. All agree that God calls, but many feel that the time element is left entirely up to the preacher. Therefore they feel free to engage freely in secular business, and do what they can to preach Saturday nights and Sundays.

The reason offered is that the church, or churches, as the case may be, are not able to pay the preacher a living for himself and family. Some enthusiastically justify themselves by saying, "I'm no better than the apostle Paul. He made tents for a living while he preached the word. I farm for a living while I preach the gospel".

The Spirit in Acts 18:3 did say something about Paul's making tents for a living one time, but the same Spirit had him say, 2 Cor. 11:7-9, that he robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do the Corinthians service. Seems to me he was shaming them a bit for not doing their duty. No preacher is too good to labor with his hands when necessity so dictates, but, at best, it must be a temporary matter.

He does not have time to spare from his God-called task. The King's business requireth haste. The good watchful shepherd cannot plow corn, sell insurance, tinker with watches, jockey with horses, travel for wholesale houses and keep his eyes on the sheep at the same time. The sheep, or the secular job, will suffer, and all too often it is the sheep.

God brought some stinging, blistering indictments against the shepherds in Ezk. 34:1-20, because they neglected the sheep, then He proceeded to enumerate in detail what the genuine Shepherd would do.

When Jesus appeared to his preachers at the sea of Tiberias, He took particular pains to point out to Peter, lovingly, tenderly, and compassionately, that he must stop fishing for fish and fish for men. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" is still a burning question. "Preacher, do you really love me more than this farm, family, or finance?" is still echoing on Tennessee hill sides and in the valleys.

2. *Shepherd Symbolism.* The symbolism used in likening a pastor to a shepherd of sheep is highly enlightening. Sheep are probably the most helpless and indefensive of our domesticated animals. They are, without a shepherd, completely at the mercy of predatory animals and also stray dogs.

The Spirit used this imagery of the shepherd because He knew it would be full of meaning and unmistakeable to country people. Just as the sheep need the constant watchfulness and care of the shepherd, even so must the pastor be regularly in close proximity to the church members to whom he is ministering.

He will need to cultivate the cold and indifferent, bring back the straying, comfort the sorrowing, cheer the sick, rebuke the stubborn, marry the young, bury the dead, minister to the destitute and compassionately preach the gospel day in and day

out with all long-suffering and patience. Yes, the spiritual sheep must be fed in green pastures, led beside the still waters, have their wounds molified with ointment, and be sheared tenderly, lovingly, but regularly.

The very nature of the requirement makes the absentee-pastor an impossibility. The priests and Levites were given cities with suburbs in Joshua 21:41 so they could live among the people to whom they ministered. Then in Titus 1:5 Paul gave instructions to ordain elders (pastors) in every city. The people still lived in cities as they did in Old Testament times, and not in the open country. This was for mutual protection as well as to have a pastor on hand at all times with the people.

The New Testament seems to teach a plurality of pastors, or elders. That is, more than one pastor for each church. Our custom has been, and is now, a plurality of churches for one pastor.

I have heard of one man who said he served eight different churches at one time and farmed also. What he meant was, he tried to preach, at scattered intervals, to eight country churches every month. At best, the majority of those churches would only see and hear him once or twice every 30 days. We don't think this could really be called pastoring in the Bible sense.

I am not criticising my preacher brethren. I've done the same thing myself. I am criticising our custom. I tried to serve four churches at one time with nothing else to occupy my time. Actual experience forced me to give up one after three

years of trying, because I had too many irons in the fire.

3. *No Part-Time New Testament Churches.* From my own study, observation and experience, I am convinced the New Testament ideal is at least one pastor for every church. But we are far from the ideal today. It will take years to change our custom.

The best temporary expedient I know of now, is to form joint-pastorates, or fields of from two to four churches in close proximity and work toward the ideal. This is admirably discussed in Dr. John D. Freeman's, "The Country Church", 1945 edition.

Even in the joint-pastorate the preacher must be willing to devote his full time, if it is to succeed. We believe the solution is in the time-call to the ministry. Is it Sunday only, or for seven days in the week, which? We believe it is for seven, and settled that matter before ordination.

III. GOD CALLS TO PLACES OF SERVICE

1. *Does God have a place* for each called one? All Baptists agree that God does the calling out of those who are to preach his gospel. The overwhelming majority of Baptists are agreed that God calls for all the time a man possesses.

It is a minority that maintains a man should make his living in secular jobs, and preach the gospel free of charge, or for a haphazard hand-out. They make pastor support an unnecessary

burden, and reduce Christian giving to the level of alms-giving.

Baptists believe the Spirit can, will and does lead the called ones to his appointed places of service. That is why churches pray to be Spirit-led in finding the right persons for pastors. Pastors are then to ascertain the same Spirit's leading before accepting the care of churches.

Naturally, we believe God uses human instrumentality in leading a church to the right man. Because we believe in human means in helping to get pastor and church together, sometimes this leaves the gate open to manipulation, scheming, wire-pulling and "politiking" all in the energy of the flesh, to get certain friends before certain prominent churches. Since few country churches are prominent, less temptation to tamper, in placing pastors, is experienced among them.

2. *How Much Means?* Just how far one may go with human means in getting before pastorless churches is a debateable question. We heard of one pulpit committee of a "First" church that received 47 applications from preachers saying they felt Spirit-led to that particular field. This is no doubt an extreme case, but it reveals certain "air-currents", to be avoided.

If a pulpit committee asks for suggestions, or recommendations, we see no harm in suggesting a name, or names, for a preaching engagement, and yet we shrink from all "trial" sermons. At best this is a poor way to select a pastor. Besides, nearly every preacher has at least two good ser-

mons, whether he uses them for special display or not.

Some churches still have a practice of parading a number of preachers across their pulpit before the members ballot on them, with the understanding that the one getting the most votes is elected. This method invites opposition and trouble to say the least of it. It has degenerated in a few places to the level of a horse-race or fox-chase in the minds of the people.

Surely this is not of the Spirit. If a preacher would refuse to allow his name to come before a church when someone else is under consideration, it would heal many a wound even before it is made. This seems to be the procedure of sanctified common sense for preachers.

One pulpit committee checked a preacher on his two previous fields, inquiring both of members and non-members, and unanimously, recommended him to the church without approaching the preacher personally, or having him before the church. Of course, some of the committee had heard him preach. This may not always be a wise procedure, but the best way on earth to know about a preacher is to check up where he has served as pastor previously.

Then if impressed with the investigation, have the preacher come some Wednesday night to meet and talk matters over. Should this meeting continue the interest, it might be well for him to be invited to preach for the people, but this should be the last step, not the first one.

We heard of a church that outlined the qualifications of their prospective pastor in such high terms that none of the twelve apostles could have qualified. This is another extreme to which a church can go.

Probably a lot of pastor "turnover", or change of fields could be avoided if we pastors waited longer upon the Lord for a field, and then when settled, would try to make that field the best in the State, unless the Spirit drove us away before we could attain that point of success. Until we can lengthen our pastorates, we should be careful how we criticise other religious groups for their pastor placements.

3. *Calls to Places.* When God sent his unnamed prophet to Bethel to prophesy against that place, it was a call to a particular place. Jonah's commission to Nineveh was a similar experience. Paul and Silas were Spirit-directed to particular fields. So were Phillip and Peter. Today we hear of men and women called to foreign mission work, and that on certain particular fields.

Others feel just as definitely impressed to work in the homeland at certain specific tasks. When our own call came to preach, the impression was clear to go to the rural fields. That leading was followed and the Lord's blessings were upon our ordinary efforts. I knew a pastor one time who said the Lord called men into the ministry, but left the places of service up to each individual. The only requirement being that he must be working for the Master somewhere.

We considered that attitude a bit unusual, but maybe that accounts partly for so many changes of pastorates among our Baptist brotherhood. If God is concerned about a particular place for us, then by all means we must try to find that place and ask for grit and grace to go.

IV. GOD CALLS TO PREPARATION

1. *Jesus' Disciples Were Taught.* When Jesus selected His helpers here on earth, He said "follow me and I will make you fishers of men". In other words, give up your nets, give me your time, and I'll give you the desire and the training to be soul-winners for me. The religious leaders and academic "doctors" of that day called them ignorant and an unlearned men. This was not because they were hopelessly illiterate, but because they were not products of the established schools.

For three or three and one-half years, these disciples went to school to Jesus. His method was "learn to do by doing," by combining the theory with practice. They followed Him, heard Him teach, saw Him perform miracles, ate with Him, slept with Him and lived with Him. And yet at His crucifixion they stumbled, hesitated and were confused. Some of their lessons were poorly learned. Later they were taught the hard way.

Now if Jesus found it necessary for these to study three years, who are we to think, when He calls, He will fill our minds with knowledge and our mouths with words without our trying to learn?

To young Timothy, came the ringing exhortation of the Spirit through Paul, "Study, to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth". All divinely called men today, are called to preparation. God puts no premium on haphazardness, triflingness, or laziness among his preachers.

2. *How May I Prepare?* If God would always call those who possess a good basic education, the special preparation would not present such a baffling problem. But for reasons better known to Himself, the Spirit calls both the academically learned and unlearned. In fact, the great majority of those called to preach must secure both basic and special training.

For those called early in life, preparation presents few problems. But for those well up in years, the educational problem may be accompanied by that of family responsibility. To these there is sometimes added an accumulated financial obligation. With all of these problems facing a man, what can he do about it?

Space here will not permit a discussion of details. But preparation has been made under these circumstances, it is being done today, and can be tomorrow. School attendance is without doubt the quickest, cheapest and best route for qualifications.

If that is impossible, and sometimes it is, then the next best thing is to buy or borrow some good books, pull off the coat, roll the sleeves and pro-

ceed to dig in. At times this is lonely work, maybe discouraging, but it promises rich returns to those who possess grit, determination, holy ambition and who faint not at the task.

It is well for us to remember that even seminary graduates are faced with the ever-present need for regular study, or they are on their way out, sooner or later, and in some instances, it is sooner than later.

3. *Is Preparation Absolutely Necessary?* Yes, even in the remotest mountain sections, the children are facing us with a high school education. If we mutilate the English language in their presence, they will question our judgment on Bible interpretation, as well as our leadership. We might as well face the issue squarely and honestly.

We must keep pace with our people in academic learning to hold their confidence and respect, or be voted out at the "annual call". We have no choice. The die is cast, argument is over, the evidence is all in—and it is against us. We must study in self-defense, if for no other reason. But the chief motive for our studying is not self-defense. It is the Spirit's clear, clarion call found in II Tim. 2:15. Read it, heed it, and "hump it".

V. GOD CALLS HIS CHILDREN TO PAY THE LABORER HIS HIRE

1. *Wrong Interpretation.* In some country churches the pastor is paid, if paid at all, by a piece of money in the members' hands, which at the hand shake is transferred to the pastor's hand. Or it

may be handed to the pastor outside the church, quietly, quickly and without any attempt at display. We have often wondered why people do it this way.

Well, they believe they are following the Bible plan as found in Matt. 6:3. Jesus was talking about alms-giving here. Alms-giving is something given to the poor—what we call charity today. In such giving it should always be done without show, or display. Therefore, the left-hand must not know what the right hand doeth.

But the church of Jesus Christ is not a beggar, or a pauper. It is his chosen Bride. We are blood-bought children and everything we are and possess, belongs to him. We merely prove the sincerity of our love to the world when we bring to the place of worship regularly that which he requires of us. Supporting a New Testament church is not an act of charity, neither can it be called an alms.

2. *Worthy of His Hire.* Jesus plainly said the laborer is worthy of his hire. That dignified the ministry and forever took it out of the class of charity, or alms-giving. Many Baptists don't know that because they have never been taught it from the pulpit. Some Baptist preachers right here have failed to declare "the whole counsel of God" as it pertains to stewardship, and as a consequence they have had to suffer.

The Spirit explained through Paul in I Cor. 9:13-14 how ministers were supported, and then said that's the way it is to be done now. The priests and levites lived on tithes and offerings

then. "Even so," or in the very same way has he ordained that ministers shall be supported today. To leave the Bible teaching on stewardship, is to enter the field of chance and speculation and chase shadows, fogs, vapors, and cloud-banks.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PASTOR'S WIFE

Only after much deliberation do we attempt this chapter. Yet it is clear from observation and experience that at least a few brief suggestions should be offered. Worthwhile literature on this subject is very scarce, so far as our knowledge extends.

So often with country preachers, the wife did not marry a minister, because he received his call later, or had not surrendered to that impression, therefore, his wife is faced with all the adjustments necessary to be the wife of a preacher. Only a very few are unwilling to make this adaptation.

Wives of country preachers will just about make, or break, their husbands, depending upon their attitude. If they gladly accept this new responsibility and do their best, happy are their husbands. If they resent it, feel that it is too sacrificing, and not a part of the marriage bargain, they can become millstones about the necks of their husbands.

Our observation is that the wives of country preachers are great souls. A more humble, a greater self-sacrificing, or more faithful group cannot be found. At thirty-nine years of age, with three children, little or no preparation for the ministry, and with heavy and pressing financial obligations, I received my call to preach, and my wife has been all that I could desire in making

the change from being the wife of a teacher to that of country preacher.

I. THE HELPMATE

1. *God's Arrangement.* Adam was first formed, then Eve. He did not take a bone from Adam's foot, to make the woman a servant to run his errands, or be his slave. He did not get a bone from Adam's head to make the woman his dictator, or boss. He took a rib from Adam's side, near his heart, and closed up the flesh thereof, and made her to be his helpmate, equal in intelligence, to be his companion—his complement, that which is necessary to complete him and render him capable of accomplishing what God demands of him.

The two became one, and yet each is a distinct personality, and performs different duties. The husband is head of the home, and should never shirk this responsibility. If the wife did not believe in him enough to respect his judgment as head of the home, she should never have married him in the first place.

If we remain on the high plane where God instituted the home, the wife will not chafe under that arrangement nor lose her place or sphere of service. She will succeed as her husband does and in direct proportion to his success. She is still fully fifty percent of that home any way it is viewed.

2. *The Wife.* That high and holy relationship of husband and wife has certain opportunities and obligations which cannot be long neglected without

imminent disaster to the partnership. Each must be constantly aware of this fact and govern himself accordingly.

Good sense here will keep all "strangers" out without any "fuss or feathers." The wife, by keeping in the best of health, by trying to be cheerful, by making the home congenial and attractive, and by remaining that faithful companion, need not worry about other women, because she keeps her fence entirely too high.

The wise wife will not dress beyond her means, or even up to her means, if the income permits much better than average of the women of their church, or churches. I know of one preacher's wife who was not a star-leader of church activities, but she reared several of the finest boys and girls to be found in Tennessee.

I know another who majored on her husband and was not outstanding as a leader in his churches. She prepared his meals whenever he came, regardless of the time of day or night. She kept his clothes neatly repaired, laundered and packed for his trips. She reared some fine boys, but she did much to make a success of her husband. He is one of our best country preachers today.

3. *His Counsellor.* Preachers are peculiar people. They get lonesome for someone of like mind to discuss matters with, talk over certain situations, or someone to whom they can tell their troubles. A preacher's wife should be his best, and safest advisor or counsellor. She will not divulge any of those intimate things, and embarrass him.

She will be interested and study his work so she can talk sensibly and intelligently about his plans, programs, and procedures, as well as strange antics in the pulpit. For instance, I was getting started in something very distracting and my wife cautioned me very kindly and nipped it in the bud. I was evidently cut out for a 250 pound man, but for some reason, never did fill out. Consequently the skin on my neck and face is very loose and elastic. A tiny throat trouble started me unconsciously to rubbing and pulling the skin out a few inches and letting it flip back to its original position, while I would be "expounding" the Scriptures. Naturally, I had good attention, but it was attention to the "skin-pulling," not expounding the Scriptures. It is almost disastrous if the wife is not sympathetic, encouraging, and fair with her husband. I know a certain pastor's wife whose chief delight seemed to consist in criticizing her husband in his preaching, judgment and actions. But to add insult to injury, she did it publicly, instead of privately. It may have been due to her physical condition (I hope it was) for she complained all the time about her aches and pains. Her husband is a good preacher and the people like him, but he was not called to at least one good pastorate because of his wife's critical and unkind attitude to him.

By being a good listener in private and public, the wife can gather many bits of information for her husband. It is not only legitimate for the pastor's wife to be eyes and ears for him, but also a very necessary requisite to safe and sane counselling.

4. *The Place of Study.* Where the home is crowded and no extra room is available for study, the preacher will likely not have one unless his wife uses her intuition and skill in home arrangement to provide it. Without a place for study, little or no study will ever be done. For brief occasions, he may be able to concentrate in the living room and prepare a sermon, but genuine preacher study is far more than sermon building.

His regular devotions will call for privacy and reasonable quietude. This almost necessitates a room. It may be at the home, or in the church building. Mine was always at home and it seemed entirely satisfactory. If the study is at home, the wife can guard him against the mere time-killers who drop in too regularly because time is heavy on their hands.

Then at times she may need to guard him against a possibly careless or a maliciously willful reputation-killer. The latter is by far the more dangerous of the two evils. She can meet and greet all callers at the door, and take the phone calls and be his own best secretary.

II. THE HOME MAKER

1. *The Home.* This is the first divine institution God made and he surrounded it with everything that was calculated to make the couple happy. That home may be a house, a one-room apartment, a trailer, a tent, a den, or even a cave on the hill-side, but if it is a place where the members can retire and hide awhile from the cares, burdens,

and vexations of the day, and rest, relax and recuperate in mind, spirit, and body, it is a home of the first order.

If there in the privacy, and sanctity of that place, they can receive sympathy, understanding and encouragement, they can come forth with an abiding faith and courage that knows no defeat. If the place one lives is like that, then we may call it home with all the necessary trimmings, and in the full sense of the word. Of course, they must love God supremely, each other faithfully, and not be afraid to work. God has no patience with laziness on the part of husband or wife.

2. *The Mother.* The pastor's wife, as mother, owes her first allegiance to the home—not to the church. Most country preachers' homes have children, if they don't, they ought to have them. While he is busy here and there, the children are likely to get into mischief, unless the mother is on hand with a steady hand, or strong hand, whichever is needed, to command respect and obedience.

By the very nature of the case the mother falls heir to more responsibility for the children because she is with them most. Their training and discipline is largely hers but a preacher husband who shirks his duty here, and doesn't fully co-operate with his wife, is not worth his salt.

The divine requirement is "One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man (preacher) know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the (a) church of God!)" By no manner

of means can this command be twisted so as to dodge the issue and leave it all with the wife. Cooperation is needed right here.

When I had to "fan-out" one of our children, Mrs. Frey kept her distance and lent all her moral support, and at the conclusion she refused the little one her comfort. That youngster got no petting from her then. When she took one to the "spank-tum-spankitorium" I minded my own business in all gravity.

How foolish, and how embarrassing, to see a father chastise a child, and the minute it is over, have the mother neutralize the whole transaction by petting and sympathizing with the little rebel. I've seen a few foolish daddies do the same absurd thing.

One time while assisting a pastor in a revival, his little son, after many and multiplied efforts, succeeded in arousing his father's displeasure. When the father broke a dry weed, to whip him, the mother turned her back and said to me, "I just can't bear to see him do it. He is so hard on our child."

At the dinner table that day, I was not surprised to see that husky youngster toss a nicely fried "drum-stick" across the table into the bowl or gravy. Some homes did not invite us, so they told me, because that preacher did not control his children. You say that is too hard on preachers. No, it is not! If we can't control our own home, how can we presume to take care of a New Testament Church?

3. *The Dietitian.* No one who lacks experience, can ever fully appreciate the difficult task the wife has in guarding the preacher's health. Without good health, he can't do his work, and churches don't want an invalid. What one eats and when he eats it greatly influences his health.

You don't have to be a medical doctor to know that hastily eaten meals while in a nervous tension, usually do more harm than good. Therefore, the wife will see to it that her husband gets his meals on time for him to meet his, oftentimes upset, schedules for meetings, conferences, etc. A good wife can soon learn what is best for her husband and try to have that. Preparation of the food may be more vital than the food itself.

But when the preacher is away from home, Solomon's advice should be heeded: "Put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite." Happy is the preacher whose "brakes" are in a good state of repair, and who has the courage to apply them at the right time.

4. *The Economist.* The low income of country preachers has contributed no little part in making pastors' wives great economists. Necessity has demanded this. They can make money go farther, buy more food and clothing—stretch the dollars more—than any other group I know of. But in spite of their economy and financial ability, they nearly always must sacrifice, keep on sacrificing, and yet appear happy and light-hearted about it.

With their canning ability, they can utilize the contributions of field and garden products and

thereby reduce the grocery bill without a deficiency showing on the table. Probably the biggest problem they face here is that of providing clothes for their children that will not be too conspicuous by their age, style or meagerness.

Children are not able to understand some of these inequalities of salaries, and the mother hears more of their resentment than the father. Preachers' children should not be the poorest dressed children in school or at church, neither is it required that they be the finest dressed; but surely they should come up to the average of their congregation.

5. *The Housekeeper.* The pastor's wife is usually as good a housekeeper as any other woman, but since the pastor's home is open to the public so much, she must not "leave the bars down" anywhere. Other women may neglect some details and nothing will ever be said about it, but not so at the parsonage.

No country community is entirely free of at least one or two "nosey sisters" who feel called, ordained, and sent to look after the details of their pastor's home. But thank the Lord, occasionally it is only one. Country preachers cannot have servants in their homes for two reasons. 1. They can't afford them. 2. The congregation would resent it.

Therefore, the pastor's wife, plus husband and children, must "weed their own row" in whatever is done in the way of keeping the house. Few if any labor-saving devices can be afforded, there-

fore, house-cleaning, washing, etc., will be done by hand, main-strength and awkwardness.

III. THE CHURCH WORKER

1. *Know the Work.* The pastor's wife may not be very proficient in all the different phases of church administration, but she will want to inform herself just as fast as time will permit for study and observation. It is not required that she shall become expert in the theory of all the organizations of the church.

It would be exceedingly helpful to her husband, however, if she did possess a good working knowledge of Sunday school, Training Union, and particularly Woman's Missionary Union. She can get books on any and all of these organizations and about all of the best technique known has been reduced to writing and now appears in books. The disposition to study will reward any woman with a comfortable understanding of these necessary parts of church life.

She may be obliged to serve as teacher, leader or officer in one or more of these departments, but it should be in an emergency and for a short, or limited time. Unless this caution is observed, the pastor's wife automatically becomes a church pack-horse, and when she leaves, nobody is trained to carry on, and the good work she has done often falls flat for the lack of another leader.

She should keep on the alert constantly for persons with talent, or leadership promise, and pass that information on to the husband. It is

much better to find and develop leaders, than to do all the leading, even though you are a capable leader, yourself. All workers should be encouraged and the pastor's wife can render invaluable service here, by just quietly, but regularly, keeping at the job.

We knew of one pastor's wife who took the music of the church as her legitimate sphere of service. Others had been playing some, but now, they were seldom used. Maybe she could play better than the others, but how are they to improve without opportunity? Surely it is better to find, encourage, and train members of the church for the different duties because they will remain there when another pastor comes on the field.

2. *Not a Paid Worker.* The wife was not employed when the pastor was called, because no salary was named for her. Some churches may expect her to earn a salary, and she may feel that she ought to take over a regular job, but only in emergencies should she load up with church responsibilities.

Pastors' wives and churches both will do well to proceed cautiously here, of course, if she has no children, she might serve in one organization regularly, and elsewhere, temporarily, but basically, we should try to find and train the church membership as fast as possible. Then too, remember she has a home and it must not be neglected.

3. *Pastor's Children.* Nearly all country preachers have children. In many cases they have matured and made their own homes. It is the little ones and those in the adolescent age that are under

consideration here. Children should be in the church services, especially the worship hour.

With the smaller ones, they must be taught how to remain with the mother while the father is preaching, and not be permitted to roam about in the building, up and down the aisles. Yes, I know they are cute, sweet and everything else, but no preacher can hold the attention of a congregation in competition with a "performing" child.

I think of our first one, and all his cute tricks at church, with more than passing embarrassment. I never knew fully how much concern he gave our pastor, until God's immutable law began to operate on me and I began to reap what I had sown. Well, to make a long story short, Mrs. Frey took the other two outside a few times, administered a bit of "hickory tea," and upon their return, peace and quietude prevailed.

Whatever the pastor's children do, in or out of church, will be used as a standard for the conduct of the other children. Therefore, we must bring ours into subjection. God requires that of us. This same parental oversight must be maintained until they make their own homes.

Trouble with the older children will be reduced to a minimum if we do our duty early enough. This new-fangled theory that we must not say "no" to the child, because that will cramp his style, is certainly not of the Lord.

4. *Visitation.* Many a family out in the country has experienced little or no visiting by the pastor

or his wife. More than one home has told me, "Pastor, you are the first preacher ever to visit in our home." A custom has almost developed whereby a very few of the homes with more conveniences become the "pastor's homes." The comforts make it easy for us to lean towards those homes, but Christian compassion will lead us into all of them—good, bad, and indifferent.

While learning a new field, and also after it is known, the wife can mean so much to the work by going with her husband. That cultivates acquaintance and lets them know the pastor and his wife are just plain country people like themselves. I realize the pastor's wife can become a burden and a bore, if she lets them know she is company, and must have attention and service too. But if she possesses the happy knack of making herself at home and will take hold and help—unless perchance she senses that her help in the kitchen is not wanted—and makes them understand "extras" are not expected, or needed, then she will be welcome.

I heard of one pastor's wife who came often and would park herself in a comfortable chair, and call for ham, or fried chicken. Then cool her heels while all preparations were being made, but never offered to help. Doubtlessly this is an extreme case. Visits to the sick, the burdened, the lonely and sad by the wife as her time will permit, will endear her to the hearts of the rural people.

I have known a few preachers whose wives never had anything to do with the church fields,

except the occasional all-day dinner with some preaching on the ground. There may be a scattered few who probably ought to absent themselves, but in most cases, I feel sure it is better for the wife to be known and have an opportunity to be loved and appreciated by the congregation.

5. *Avoid Favorites.* Here is probably the most difficult admonition of all to heed. We like intimate friends. We get lonesome without them. Why can't we have them on the field? The answer is short and simple. It cannot be done without exhibiting partiality to some degree, and partiality, or favoritism, will be promptly resented in the country.

The wife should try to make friends of all, not just a few. She must think of the needs of the membership and less and less about her own comforts, and conveniences. If we sometimes are tempted to feel that maybe this is not necessary, or requires too much sacrifice, let us remember the Lord is taking notice, and he never forgets. Somehow it will be all right some day.

CHAPTER XIV

RURAL CHURCH PROJECTS

My own experience as pastor has been confined to four churches in the open country, two in towns of about 1,000 population, one in a city, and the other in a village where I grew up and held five consecutive revival meetings in as many years in the very beginning of my ministry.

These are actual illustrations of what has really been done, and not "arm-chair" or "fine-spun" theory. The first person is used in recounting these experiences that I may be more direct, but I assure you an effort will be made to avoid any attitude of boasting or bragging.

ABARAT, JACKSON

FEBRUARY 1, 1934—FEBRUARY 1, 1937

This church was constituted in 1850, and remains in the open country. In 1923, an oak tree fell across the building, necessitating a new house—a blessing not much disguised. It was built by sacrifice, dedicated debt-free, and immediately the good people began to rest upon their past achievements. The valley of the 1933 depression had not been fully crossed. There were 140 church members, 100 of whom were resident. The treasury was depleted, no fire insurance was carried on the \$10,000 investment, and a small amount of unpaid salary was due the former pastor. It had quarter-time preaching.

A Prayer Meeting was begun and kept going for three years, and the attendance the last year averaged 40. The furnace took so much time to heat up the auditorium that Prayer Meeting was usually over before the room was very comfortable. We moved into two Sunday school rooms that opened together, cut a hole into the chimney, and set up a small wood heater. Soon this space was filled and it would hold about 50. Whether this small space helped to increase the attendance, I am not able to say, but we got some joy out of saying we had a "full-house" at the Prayer Meeting on Monday night.

The Every Member Canvass plus a lot of preaching on stewardship and missions moved the budget from \$438.10 a year up to \$729.00 the third year with gifts to missions increasing 124%. The church voted to send \$5.00 a month through the Co-operative Program as a beginning.

Mrs. Frey found four ladies laboring in the Woman's Missionary Society. She used her car to round up other ladies. Before long, 15 to 20 women became so interested they managed their own transportation for attendance upon the meetings. A good live society helps any church. Once a quarter, the Mission Program was given at the Prayer Meeting hour and I tried to enlighten the men on missions while the other groups were having their programs.

The men here had a very fixed habit or fling out after Sunday school, and draping themselves on the roots of the trees in the shade to snatch a

few whiffs from their "pipes of peace". Naturally, the boys piled out after them, even though they dared not smoke. This left the pastor with the ladies, girls, and babies to carry on and try to "sing them in" before time for the sermon. After many futile efforts at persuasion, and becoming slightly irritated one day after they had swarmed out, I announced my text and calmly preached my message to those present without song. Just as I was giving the invitation, a few of them began to straggle back, looking a bit "sheepish", and slip into the rear seats. Well, after the benediction, most of 'em grinned at me as I left the church, but at the last report the habit had never been broken entirely.

In 1936 the following record was made:

Averaged 100% of resident members enrolled in Sunday school; averaged 72% of resident members in actual attendance; averaged 47% of resident members in Training Union attendance; averaged 40% of resident members in Prayer Meeting; averaged 14 cents a Sunday per resident member in giving.

All bills were paid, \$75.00 were in the treasury, and the church at my request, accepted my resignation that they might have half-time. Money was still scarce and the depression was not over, but these small improvements are enough to indicate progress can be made even amid adverse circumstances, among conservative people, and in a country church.

MAPLE SPRINGS, MERCER

NOVEMBER 15, 1933—NOVEMBER 15, 1938

This church in the open country, was constituted in 1849, and for a long time has had half-time preaching. It was served largely by absentee preachers, but seldom had a student-preacher. The clerk's home burned, and original records were lost. Previously smouldering fires were fanned a bit by rewriting the church roll and therefore, some were of Apollos, others of Cephas, many of Paul, and some of Christ.

The \$20 a month salary was insufficient, but the people felt unable to improve it, therefore, a queer arrangement for financing was proposed, discussed, and adopted. They said more than three-fourths of all collections had gone to the pastor formerly. I suggested that they give me for my pay that which came in on three Sundays, and promised to guarantee all other expenses would be collected the other Sunday. They reluctantly agreed, provided I would let that one Sunday be one of my preaching days, but said I would surely starve on my own proposition.

A canvass was made for tithes or pledges, and the money was collected through the Sunday school because it met every Sunday. This ran for four years, and the pastor's pay averaged \$40.00 a month, while the total gifts averaged \$1,600.00. The next year I recommended a regular budget with pastor's salary included. They agreed and fixed it at \$50.00 a month.

The fifth and last year showed \$1,513.16 in the budget and \$269.05 of it going to missions and benevolences. The Lord's Acres helped us raise a portion of this money. Seven Sunday school rooms were provided, carbide lights were installed, building was painted outside, and roofed. Then they decided to ceil inside with celotex, new wood, specially carved which gave it the finish of a chapel like the city undertaking parlors. This gave us a house as neat and attractive as is found in most city churches.

I would not recommend the above financial procedure to everyone, but it worked splendidly there. I have heard of some pastors who took churches on a percentage basis when the budget was small, and held to it after development brought them far above average pay. This left little money with which to operate the churches.

Two busses were put on and run to serve territory not reached by any other churches, and this helped us to raise the average attendance from around 70 to 140. This was in spite of mud roads where winters played havoc with our attendance.

One young lady, Miss Janie Sue Jones, now Mrs. Harold Gilliland, from this church graduated from the Training School at Louisville, and did special Christian service for the Association and the State Mission Board. Two young men, Leonard Sanderson and Alvin Gilliland, surrendered to the ministry, finished high school, college, and are now, 1946, in the seminary preparing for greater usefulness. They have had to make their own expenses while carrying on this training.

WESTOVER, JACKSON

MARCH 1, 1934—DECEMBER 1, 1939

This church was principally a colony from West Jackson church, for 17 members secured letters and organized in 1928. They began with a resident pastor on full-time, but depression changed them to half-time with only a temporary tabernacle for which they were in debt. The Woman's Missionary Society financed the church chiefly by selling commodities.

The first step was to set up a church budget and relieve the good women of that burden. The Every Member Canvass was worked every year, supplemented by preaching on stewardship and missions. This multiplied the annual gifts by two, and the mission gifts by three. It was a struggle to secure money with which to build for our needs. This was one time the pastor had to be among the biggest givers.

A basement was dug, the floor concreted, and the walls brick veneered between the pillars. Except for the pillars, a row of windows completely surrounded the basement. Then the tabernacle was reinforced and pulled over that basement. The Sunday school attendance wobbled around an average of 65, but immediately upon entering the new space the average increased to nearly 100.

The basement was cool in summer, warm in winter, and lighter than the auditorium. A drain was fixed so any water would pass right on out. My successor came for full-time and this has been maintained since my leaving.

POPLAR HEIGHTS, JACKSON

FEBRUARY 1, 1934—FEBRUARY 1, 1942

Dr. R. E. Guy organized this church in 1923, and was their pastor for the first 10 years. He preached every other Sunday afternoon, but maintained both Sunday school and Prayer Meeting from the very start. It is in the open country with less than half the families being land owners, consequently, much moving has taken place each year.

This was my first and only pastorate where I lived on the field. This one fact probably accounts mostly for the annual budget averaging \$1,750.46 for my eight years when compared with the former ten of \$888.50. The annual Every Member Canvass and special efforts during the year, particularly when crops were harvested, plus stewardship teaching, kept the number of givers increasing each year. Many were strict tithers. Some few objected to the Bible plan of finance, but they were a small minority.

The church bought three acres across the road and deeded half of it to the County Board of Education. A three-room house was erected, used for four years, and purchased by the church when the school was consolidated. From this material a nice modern five-room parsonage was erected on the land. The pastor has on these three acres ample room for garden, cow lot, chicken yard, and pig lot for whatever number of hams he desires. The church auditorium was finished inside with

new wood, which gave us equipment as attractive as can be found.

The Sunday school average for the 8 years was 97 with our resident members remaining around 115. A Training Union was organized several times, but each time it was short-lived, until Miss Hortense Rushing took charge. Under her practical leadership it has done splendid work. Mrs. Frey and the other ladies maintained an A-1 W. M. S. most of the time.

Two revivals were held each year with home-talent in charge of the winter meeting, and a visiting minister for summer. Attendance and visible results were as gratifying in winter as in the summer.

The church directed the social life which gave the people a wholesome outlet for the social urge, and made the dance and roadhouse unpopular in that community. A newly moved in family announced a party and invited the young people. Soon the rugs were being rolled up to make ready for a dance. Our young people explained they did not dance, and began to excuse themselves in the proper attitude. No more dances were staged there that year, neither did that family ostracize the community.

Upon my resignation, Dr. Guy supplied a few months, during which time the pastorium was finished, and the new pastor came for full-time work. George W. Crawford gave up his farming, finished Harrison-Chilhowee Academy and Union University and now, 1946, is a Chaplain in the U. S.

Army of Occupation in Germany. The church rendered him some financial aid while in these schools, but it did not reduce the regular gifts to missions one bit.

Miss Hortense Rushing deserves special mention also. For several years, on account of her Mother's sickness, she has had full home responsibility with no opportunity for attending college, and yet she has so used her time that her services are eagerly sought by churches and associations interested in a program of improvement. She is now doing special work this summer, 1946, for the State Mission Board.

These four churches constituted my field for the first three years, at which time Ararat was given up and that time invested in the other three. A census was taken every three years for the benefit of the Sunday schools, but it also helped in our work of evangelism. The following comparison of the census for 1934-1937 tells an interesting story:

MAPLE SPRINGS

1934, cards returned, 361. Number of lost people, 114.

1937, cards returned, 367. Number of lost people, 83.

Baptisms for the period 87, or a gain of 10 per year.

WESTOVER

1934, cards returned, 201. Number of lost people, 64.

1937, cards returned, 237. Number of lost people, 66.

Baptisms for the period 17, or a small loss for three years.

POPLAR HEIGHTS

1934, cards returned, 244. Number of lost people, 42.

1937, cards returned, 274. Number of lost people, 46.

Baptisms for the period 32, or a loss of one each year.

A record like this will be an eye-opener to any consecrated pastor whether he be city or country worker. Try it.

SPOTTSVILLE, KENTUCKY

HELD 5 CONSECUTIVE REVIVALS, 1932-1936

This was a thriving little mining town until Green River filled the mine shaft in the overflow of 1912, and the 2,000 population dwindled away to about 500 in 1931. Methodist and Presbyterian churches closed except for an occasional funeral or protracted meeting, but a few of those members came to the Baptist Sunday school and other services.

In 1931 the Sunday school averaged in attendance 50, and the budget was \$257.42, of which amount \$124.75 was paid to the faithful pastor, now well up in years. No baptisms had been reported in about three years, and the building was in a bad state of repair. This was my home town.

I was born there and peddled milk, butter and eggs regularly as a barefoot boy. Had to fight one day because I was a country "jake," and the boys wanted to run me out of town. I may have lost that fight, but did not get run out of town. I still pride myself upon the stand made there that day. It was a great stand for any country boy, but the stand made 30 years later was far more outstanding.

At 40 years of age and while much concerned about the call to preach, I visited my parents that spring, dropped into the little struggling Sunday school one morning, and volunteered my services, free-gratis-for-nothing, to lead the singing in a revival with the pastor doing the preaching. I was accepted to sing and preach both, although I had made only one previous feeble attempt at preaching.

The Lord was gracious and good to us, and for 5 consecutive summers, I held the revival. Eighty were baptized in Green River, including my Father and Mother, 16 were added by letter, and 32 rededicated their lives, all of which was encouraging to the 65 members who had been "staying by the stuff".

Tithing and stewardship, as well as salvation by grace alone, were emphasized, the people responded and rallied. The basement of a building was begun, in 1933, all of which was completed in 1936 with furnace and later "tailor-made" benches replaced the old home-made benches.

Their building is a real credit to any town, their program is full, the church is a gospel lighthouse in that community with efforts through the Co-operative Program to the ends of the earth.

It has been full-time for 8 to 10 years and is now ready to build a home for the pastor. This new work began 15 years ago and a new generation has risen up but, unlike the Pharaoh, they still remember kindly, "Joseph", the writer.

ALAMO

NOVEMBER 15, 1938—FEBRUARY 1, 1942

Constituted in 1870, this church is located in the county seat town, the center of business and social life of a good farming district. Everybody comes to town on Saturday, some to shop, others for amusement, and some just come. Population then was slightly over 1,100.

A new house of worship was built around 1924 with a sizeable sum of indebtedness when the depression struck its devastating blow in 1933. When their pastor resigned in 1936 it was more than two years before another was called. Some were beginning to believe the debt would have to be paid before they could afford a pastor.

Needless to say, considerable emphasis the first year of my pastorate was placed upon stewardship, tithing and enlistment. This enabled us to reduce the debt about \$1,000 and do some necessary repairs. After this first year the debt was regularly reduced and nearly \$1,000 spent each year on repairs and improvements. Hope was

revived and even the most pessimistic were satisfied that a pastor is a necessary adjunct in a New Testament church.

For awhile two to three autos went out eight miles to a community that had been disturbed by Russellism and brought in several children and young people to Sunday school. By putting on a truck we brought in from 40 to 65, mostly children, to our church each Sunday morning. This so swelled our attendance that those who lived in town pricked up their ears and more of them dropped in to see what was "happening".

With this fine group of children, a choir was begun and they sang, each Sunday, choruses as a regular feature of the worship program. Their enthusiastic performance was a genuine delight to all the adults. We had from 35 to 65 of them present each Sunday, winter and summer. I conducted chapel for them at their consolidated grammar school, held an outdoor revival during the summer and did some preaching in the various homes during the winter.

The Sunday school grew from about 100 in attendance to 173 average the third year. The truck helped to increase and maintain the attendance here. It was expensive, but we believe it more than paid for itself.

BELLS

DECEMBER 1, 1939—FEBRUARY 1, 1942

This church under the inspiration of its pastor, Dr. I. N. Penick, built a new house in 1923 and

dedicated it free of debt, a most unusual accomplishment, but after this there came a lull or lapse of zeal and things continued in this groove for awhile. Half-time preaching had been its custom for many years, but no pastorium was ever built.

Upon my accepting this pastorate, the men suggested that evangelism be emphasized and the subject of money matters be relegated to a place of minor importance. Within three months the treasury was depleted entirely. After presenting Bible finance by sermon, bulletin, tract, and otherwise, the contributions replenished the treasury, repaired the building, and accumulated a balance toward purchasing a home for the pastor. The home will become a reality when building restrictions are lifted.

Sunday school had struck a new low in attendance and for ten months my best efforts proved to be fruitless so far as the records revealed. Then when time for election of officers and teachers came the whole set-up was revamped. Some Primary teachers were changed to Young People, and Adults, to Primaries. This was a drastic step and fraught with much danger as every pastor knows, either from experience or observation, or both. But the Lord was in this move and growth was experienced the very first month. Within six months the average attendance had doubled and all the workers, including the pastor, were supremely happy.

Prayer Meeting was poorly attended and the former pastor often had the few to meet in his

home. Bank night was on at the picture show on Prayer Meeting night and some of our best men and women were attending. At first some suggested we dodge the keen competition by changing the night, but finally we decided to face the issue squarely and leave the results with Him who does all things well, and He did.

The "bank night" lost our members and Prayer Meeting moved up to 48, with the average around 35. Nothing to brag about, but an issue was met and overcome. One night our pianist's name was called at the picture show when the "jack-pot" was \$50.00. She was at Prayer Meeting that night and I wondered a bit about her reaction toward the affair. When informed about her "loss of \$50.00" she said she was not sorry that she attended the Prayer Hour that night.

Our Brotherhood did its best work in accepting assignments of names for church and Sunday school attendance. Some of the most promising "prospects" were brought to the services by the Brotherhood. Here is where the men can do some very fine work for the Lord.

The half-time preaching program had become a very fixed custom in the church but two years of sympathetic agitation enabled them to call the next man for full-time. They have found it easier to finance full-time than half-time. Bells church has a fine missionary spirit that is reflected in its budget.

CALVARY, NASHVILLE

JUNE 1, 1943—MAY 1, 1944

MAY 1, 1945—DECEMBER 31, 1945

On two different occasions I had the privilege of supplying while this church searched for a regular pastor. The first time was from June 1, 1943 to May 1, 1944, and again from May 1, 1945 to January 1, 1946. When Calvary was organized in 1908 it had an open field on all sides, but time has changed that condition. Now the Negro population has moved in on the north side of the street next to the church building. Eventually this church may find it the part of wisdom to move to the center of its constituency.

During the first period of supply, evangelism and stewardship were emphasized. Sunday school attendance increased some, but very few were baptized. Stewardship response was very gratifying. Mission gifts multiplied and a house was purchased to be used as a parsonage and practically paid for. However, it needed considerable repairing.

The next period of supply, Sunday school work was magnified and the attendance was increased appreciably. Training Union attendance likewise improved. A series of letters was used—one each week—for 6 weeks and these helped to improve the attendance upon all services to a very marked degree. At first only three letters were intended, but the response was so good the deacons requested that they be extended to six instead, with the church budget paying the cost.

With this renewed attendance, interest was awakened in every activity of the church program. Money gravitated to the treasury, and more people were added to the membership. Tuesday afternoon was a fixed time for visitation during my pastorate. Some women would visit, two together. We men went out by twos and I tried to visit with different ones. That procedure encouraged the more timid men and soon they were about as effective as the pastor.

Average Sunday school attendance in 1943 was 135, for 1946 it averaged 173. Budget for 1943 was \$3,811.30 with \$791.04 or 21% going for missions and benevolences. Budget for 1946 was \$7,048.02, \$2,388.52 of which went for missions and benevolences, or 33% of it.

This church is made up of working people with little or no wealth. The constant change of the constituency constitutes a real problem. The lack of space, equipment and facilities cause them to lose regularly every year many of the best developed and promising young people to more fortunate churches, but in spite of these adverse circumstances, Calvary church is a missionary church in practice as well as in spirit in projecting the kingdom to the ends of the earth.

This year, 1946, will probably show it to be the best year in many so far as baptisms are concerned. Chaplain Raymond Morgan took over as pastor January 1, 1946, when he was mustered out of the Navy.

CHAPTER XV

SHALL I BECOME A COUNTRY PREACHER?

The previous chapters have dealt with the reality of the country church situation as it exists today east of the Mississippi River, with particular attention to Tennessee and the adjoining states. We have looked at the nature and disposition of the people and found them a pretty fine lot. Their common problems have been investigated and suggestions made for solving them.

Some cases have been presented where progress has been made by using simple expedients that may be repeated elsewhere with profit. The country preacher and his call have been discussed, and now we are ready to answer the question used as the subject of this chapter. Before the final conclusion, however, let us take one more look at both city and country fields of pastoral usefulness.

I. THE CITY PASTORATE

1. *The Income.* The first thing most of us think of in connection with our city brother, is the good salary, at least it appears good, and the usual home furnished free of rent. A close scrutiny of that good salary, when placed alongside the items it must buy, relieves it of some of its lustre, glitter, and sparkle.

Yet we must face the facts, and agree that it far surpasses the financial support of country preachers. In addition to the salary, and that paid weekly, or every two weeks, we remember about ex-

penses to conventions and other distinctive gatherings, to say nothing of from two weeks, to a month of vacation with full pay; and all pulpit supplies thrown in for good measure.

Truly the financial returns are attractive, and we can understand their lure and influence upon preachers, whether young or old.

2. *The Home.* That home with its comforts and conveniences cannot be ignored. Every couple worth their salt hopes some day to enjoy a good home with at least the ordinary conveniences. When we realize that the most of the homes enjoyed by preachers' families will have to be furnished by the churches, we can then begin to appreciate the appeal they possess.

Then, too, just around the corner is the neighborhood grocery store with the vegetables already canned, and other items of food packaged and waiting for the shopper with the cash. Naturally the wife of the pastor, who draws his pay each week, has few, if any, money problems—the gap between pay days is entirely too short for that.

3. *Schools.* The educational standards of both grammar and high schools in the cities usually, not always, out-point those of the county in the matter of teachers, equipment, and facilities. The future of any preacher's child is greatly influenced, for better or worse, by the type of school he must attend. It is not pure selfishness on the part of preachers to want the best in education for their children. The best is none too good for anybody's child.

4. *Qualified Leaders.* When it comes to getting church work done, the city pastor is usually blessed with an abundance of capable leadership. There are the professionals; teachers, lawyers, doctors, bankers, and business executives, all skilled in dealing with people. Of course, they may be hard to enlist, and when enlisted, may not be too well consecrated to the Lord, but there they are, anyway.

5. *Paid Staff.* Not only is there a supply of qualified leaders, but also a corps of paid workers is at the direction of the pastor in the city. The church secretary, pastor secretary, organist, chorister, and educational director, or assistant pastor. This all looks good, whether it works out so harmoniously in practice or not.

Of course, the large memberships in churches now make helpers an absolute necessity, regardless of what we may think about it. All of this, plus the thrill of preaching to large congregations, makes the city situation very interesting.

6. *Boards and Committees.* Without any wilful or malicious intent upon the part of nominating committees at Conventions, it seems to have become a universal custom to place our city pastors on all boards and committees of importance. Apparently by virtue of certain pastorates, the ministers are chosen as trustees for our various agencies.

This is not written as a criticism. It is stated as a fact that can easily be verified. Need we be surprised when we hear of what appears to be

keen interest in certain pulpits in our cities? Not if we are careful observers.

7. *Fellowship.* Preachers, maybe more than other groups, crave fellowship. They want to have fellowship with other preachers particularly of the same faith and order. This is a very commendable desire. The city pastors' conference, made up of Baptists, or of all preachers in the city, will satisfy this feeling for friendship and fellowship. Libraries also are available in cities for those interested in using them. Is it any wonder that some of us cast envious glances at these city pastorates?

II. THE RURAL PASTORATE

1. *The Income.* We readily admit that the average pastor-pay in the country is low, very low, in fact, in some spots it has just about ceased to be. Still there are some places that have been developed to where they amply care for their pastors. This difference in support of country preachers is not a thing of mere chance. It is due to long, hard work in teaching and training. The matter of a vacation-with-pay in the country is usually changed to a revival meeting, the financial results of which may not be so bad. Just a difference in the use of a preacher's time. A revival will help any preacher spiritually and financially. That seems to be the will of the Lord.

Expenses to conventions for country pastors is a thing not altogether unheard of among rural churches. It is coming, though slowly, however. What should be our attitude? Shall we look for a

church already developed, or shall we take what comes and try to make it, under the Lord, all we could desire?

2. *The Home.* Pastoriums are being built in the country, or purchased, so the pastor can live on the field. With rural electrification coming, these country homes may have all the conveniences found in a city. From the garden can be had the best of fresh vegetables, not the flopsy-wopsy withered kind that some people must buy.

Yes, there is some work attached to this procedure, but after trying both sources, I prefer the garden near by. It's free for the producing. All the surplus may be canned or processed for winter use. I've seen the cellars of some rural preachers' homes that resemble veritable grocery stores. Living out of a paper sack is not so fancy after all, and besides it consumes cash constantly.

3. *Schools.* Country schools are consolidating and thereby attracting more capable teachers. The bus transportation, even though crowded, eliminates some of the cold and exposure in getting to and from school. These schools may class only from fair to good, but the country boys and girls climb into some very attractive positions in spite of any educational deficiencies. Those who finish the common schools and desire more usually have the determination to get it, regardless of where offered.

4. *Qualified Leaders.* The leadership problem is one in which the country churches have no choice. Leaders must be found and manufactured, not only for the country, but also for the city. Instead of

its becoming a burden too heavy to bear, it may be turned into a challenge, or dare, to do a thing unusual in that little community. Shall we look at it as a burden or a blessing? Much depends upon the mettle of the minister.

5. *Paid Staff.* Paid workers in the country, except the pastor, are rare indeed. This is due to the fact the membership is made up largely of people who operate their own business—farming—are their own bosses, and consequently may exercise freedom unknown to the factory or business employee. The voluntary system in the rural districts is still available for nearly anything about which interest may be aroused. The membership of the churches is not very large, and the big group of regular helpers is not absolutely necessary. We have labored in both situations, and frankly we like the volunteer system.

6. *Boards and Committees.* The opportunities for country preachers to be used on boards and committees are rare indeed. We don't like this custom. We don't think it is fair. We don't believe we merit such constant oversight. To say that all country preachers lack the necessary qualifications for these places of honor and trust, is to close one's eyes to the truth.

Surely no one will conclude that city pastors are used because their churches give most of the mission money. If an investigation were made, it might be that the per capita mission gifts of some rural churches would compare favorably with some city churches.

Country preachers have shown a fine spirit about this matter. They have not become bitter or rebellious. They have faith in their denomination and are willing to go right on while hoping for a better day. Frankly, we think it might do good for a country pastor to be asked to preach the Convention sermon sometime. It would at least allow for variety, and some of them are equal to the task.

7. *Fellowship.* The rural pastor suffers loneliness because of his isolation. This very fact accounts for his peculiar attitude at times. He is denied the friendship, fellowship and fun of gatherings like pastors' conferences. He is accustomed to working alone, and so his experience in co-operative affairs is limited. The idea of associational pastors' conferences is growing and already some fine groups are operating. In time we believe this deficiency can be eliminated or overcome to a great extent.

III. MY DECISION

1. *Our Decision.* We feel sure the Lord knows best where we can serve in his kingdom. He knows the place. But we live in a material world which makes certain demands and sometimes these demands are so noisy that we miss the Lord's directions. For instance, a preacher graduates from school with his diploma and some debts. Down deep in his heart, he has an urge to accept a country pastorate and give the world at least one model rural field with all the trimmings. But about that time he gets a letter from the school that issued the diploma, or the bank, or the endorser of his note, saying, "Please remit," or "How

about a payment on your obligation," when as yet he has not accepted a pastorate.

Needless to say he is rudely awakened to the grim reality of paying for money already spent while trying to support his family on cash instead of the cuff. Immediately he has a family conference, or goes into a "huddle" with the wife. Usually she is very practical. She may have her head up in the clouds, spiritually speaking, like her preacher husband, but her feet will be firmly fixed upon the ground.

They read the records published of pastor support in the country and city. They see more people in town to be ministered to than in the country, and before they realize it, they have a city pastorate. Who will denounce and criticise their actions? Let him that is without sin, cast the first criticism. Debts must be paid and preachers must live within their incomes, or soon no church wants them. But right here is the forks in the road, where many a good country pastor is lost to the city church.

2. *Another Choice.* Here comes another preacher from the school-room, courtroom, work-bench, or maybe the wide-open spaces—debts or no debts—he has his heart set on a rural pastorate, as the Lord leads. The unselfish desire to minister to the neglected areas, overcomes the fear of sacrifice for himself and family. Somebody, financially able, has faith in this preacher and tides him over for a few years while the mud-sills of a future flourishing country community are being laid.

Fired by a holy ambition, he refuses any and all discouragements on, plus occasional lures from, the field, and plugs away month after month, year after year. After while, his ideal begins to shape up as a reality. The rural people say, "here's a man after our hearts, let's follow him." And that is what they did. They repaired, redecorated, and improved the old church building by adding rooms for Sunday school and Training Union. They moved up with his salary to where his living is no longer a burden. Not only necessities are available now, but a few luxuries can be had. A new home has been built, or bought, and put in good livable shape. They gladly share regularly their abundance of food stuff. Scarcely ever does a pig squeal in that community without a nice piece of it finding its way to the pastorium.

He marries their young, buries their dead, and stands by with genuine sympathy, while loved ones are passing through the shadows of sorrow and sadness. He rejoices with that couple when the first baby arrives, maybe his auto carries them to the hospital. At their all-day gatherings, he is on hand to make it the best ever. The regular services are well attended, in fact, the auditorium is filled now every once and awhile. The beer-joints, liquor stores, and honky-tonks have had to fold up and, like cockroaches when the light is turned on, scamper away. The social life has been permeated by Christian ideals and now clean fun is available for all ages. Juvenile delinquency, crime and divorce have been reduced to a minimum. Property values have advanced considerably, and only in

rare instances is a house for rent. The building of new homes may be seen and the old quiet conservative community is now alive with interest and enthusiasm. The pastor and his wife are two of the best loved in that neighborhood. They are the real leaders, though not always out in front. Their services are eagerly sought for programs in other churches. The pastor has all the calls for revivals he can safely spare from his field. They are happy, the Lord has richly blessed them, and the members say, "We have the best preacher in the State."

3. *Who Is That Preacher?* You mean what is his name? Well, he could be you!

BOOKS FOR A COUNTRY PREACHER

A suggested list of minimum equipment, or books, for a country preacher.

1. Bibles:

King James Translation
American Standard Version
Centenary Translation of the New Testament

2. Concordance:

Cruden

3. Dictionary:

Webster's Students'
Smith's Dictionary of the Bible

4. Commentary:

Jamison, Faucett and Brown, one Vol.

5. Homiletics:

How to Prepare Sermons, by W. B. Evans

6. History:

The Development of America, by Wirth
Church that Jesus Built, Roy Mason

7. Bible Geography:

A Bible Atlas, by Hurlbut
Biblical Backgrounds, by Adams

8. Theology:

Revelation and God, by Conner
The Gospel of Redemption, Conner

9. Stewardship:
Grace of Giving, Burroughs
Living Abundantly, by Burkhalter
10. Missions:
The Course of Christian Missions, Carver
Epochs in Home Missions, Burton
Priority of State Missions, Pope
11. Administration:
Sunday School—A Church Using Its Sunday School
Training Union Manual, 1942 edition
Woman's Missionary Union Manual
12. Annuals:
Association
State Convention
Southern Baptist Convention
13. General:
Parliamentary Law, by Creasman
Ministers' Manual, by Hobbs
Church Manual, by Pendleton
14. Papers:
Baptist and Reflector
Home Mission
Commission

When I recommend any book except the Bible, I do not mean to say that I agree with everything in it. I am saying it is the best book on the subject with which I am familiar. Any of the above list may be had from any Baptist Book Store.

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